UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
3 1761 01328711 5

Bequeathed

to

The University of Toronto Library

by

The late Maurice Hutton,
M.A., LL.D.

Principal of University College

1901-1928

Digitized by Microsoft®

Maurice Hutton
67 Queens Park
Toronto

1900 -

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized for Microsoft Corporation
by the Internet Archive in 2007.
From University of Toronto.
May be used for non-commercial, personal, research,
or educational purposes, or any fair use.
May not be indexed in a commercial service.

LES MISÉRABLES.

Part Third.

MARIUS.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft ®

MARIUS.

Digitized by Microsoft®

LES MISÉRABLES.

By VICTOR HUGO.

Part Third.

MARIUS.

391335
18.4.41

BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.
1892.

SEEN BY
PRESERVATION
SERVICES
DATE.....

Digitized by Microsoft®

Copyright, 1887,
By Little, Brown, and Company.

PQ
2286
A45
1892
pt. 3

University Press:
John Wilson and Son, Cambridge.

Digitized by Microsoft®

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

MARIUS.

Book I.

PARIS STUDIED IN ITS GAMIN.

Chapter		Page
I.	Parvulus	1
II.	The Gamin's Characteristics	3
III.	He is Agreeable	5
IV.	He may be Useful	7
V.	His Confines	9
VI.	A Bit of History	13
VII.	The Gamin would have his Place in Indian Castes	16
VIII.	A Charming Anecdote of the Last King	19
IX.	The Old Soul of Gaul	21
X.	Ecce Paris, Ecce Homo	23
XI.	The Reign of Ridicule	28
XII.	The Future Latent in the People	31
XIII.	Little Gavroche	33

Digitized by Microsoft ®

Book II.

LE GRAND BOURGEOIS.

Chapter		Page
I.	Ninety Years and Two-and-thirty Teeth	37
II.	Like Master, Like Home	40
III.	Luc Esprit	42
IV.	An Aspiring Centenarian	44
V.	Basque and Nicolette	46
VI.	Magnon and her Two Little Ones	48
VII.	Rule: No One Received until Evening	51
VIII.	Two do not make a Pair	52

Book III.

GRANDFATHER AND GRANDSON.

I.	An Old Drawing-room	55
II.	A Red Spectre of that Day	60
III.	Requiescant!	69
IV.	The End of the Brigand	80
V.	Marius meets a Churchwarden	85
VI.	What Resulted from Meeting a Churchwarden	88
VII.	Some Petticoat	97
VIII.	Marble against Granite	104

Book IV.

THE FRIENDS OF THE A. B. C.

I.	A Group that nearly became Historical	111
II.	Bossuet's Funeral Oration on Blondeau	131
III.	Marius is Astonished	136
IV.	The Back Room of the Café Musain	139
V.	Enlargement of the Horizon	150
VI.	Res Angusta	156

Digitized by Microsoft®

Book V.

THE GOOD OF MISFORTUNE.

Chapter		Page
I.	Marius is Indigent	160
II.	Marius Poor	164
III.	Marius Grows	169
IV.	M. Mabœuf	176
V.	Poverty a Good Neighbor to Misery	182
VI.	The Substitute	186

Book VI.

THE CONJUNCTION OF TWO STARS.

I.	Nicknames and Surnames	193
II.	Lux Facta Est	198
III.	The Effect of Spring	202
IV.	Beginning of a Great Malady	204
V.	Mame Bougon is Thunder-struck	208
VI.	Taken Prisoner	210
VII.	Adventures of the Letter "U" left to Conjectures	214
VIII.	Even Invalids may be Lucky	217
IX.	Eclipse	220

Book VII.

PATRON MINETTE.

I.	Mines and Miners	224
II.	The Bottom	228
III.	Babet, Gueulemer, Claquesous, and Montparnasse	231
IV.	Composition of the Troop	235

Digitized by Microsoft®

Book VIII.

THE EVIL POOR.

Chapter		Page
I.	Marius Looking for a Girl's Bonnet meets a Man's Cap	239
II.	Marius finds Something	242
III.	Four Letters	245
IV.	A Rose in Wretchedness	251
V.	A Providential Peep-Hole	261
VI.	The Wild-Beast Man in his Lair	265
VII.	Strategy and Tactics	271
VIII.	A Sunbeam in the Garret	276
IX.	Jondrette almost Cries	279
X.	The Tariff of Cab-fares	285
XI.	Wretchedness offers Help to Sorrow	290
XII.	The Use of M. Leblanc's Five-Franc Piece	294
XIII.	Plot and Counterplot	301
XIV.	A Police-Agent gives a Lawyer two "Knock-me-downs"	305
XV.	Jondrette makes his Purchase	311
XVI.	A Song to an English Air popular in 1832	315
XVII.	The Use of Marius's Five-Franc Piece	321
XVIII.	The Two Chairs Face to Face	327
XIX.	Treating of Dark Depths	330
XX.	The Trap	336
XXI.	Always begin by Arresting the Victims	369
XXII.	The Little Child who Cried in Volume Second	375

Digitized by Microsoft®

MARIUS.

BOOK I.

PARIS STUDIED IN ITS GAMIN.

CHAPTER I.

PARVULUS.

Paris has a child and the forest has a bird; the bird is called a sparrow, the child is called a gamin. Couple these two ideas, the one which is all furnace, the other all dawn; bring the two sparks, Paris and childhood, into collision, and a little being is produced, — a *homuncio*, as Plautus would say.

This little being is joyous; he does not eat every day, and he goes to the theatre every night if he thinks proper. He has no shirt on his body, no shoes on his feet, and no covering on his head; he is like the flies, which have none of those things. He is from seven to thirteen years of age, lives in gangs, rambles about the streets, lodges in the open air, wears an old pair of his father's trousers, which descend lower than his heels, an old hat belonging to some other father, which comes below his ears, and one yellow list brace. He runs, watches, begs, kills time, colors pipes, swears like a fiend, haunts

Digitized by Microsoft ®

the wine-shop, knows thieves, is familiar with women of the town, talks slang, sings filthy songs, and has nothing bad in his heart; for he has in his soul a pearl, Innocence; and pearls are not dissolved by mud. So long as the man is a child, God desires that he should be innocent. If we were to ask the enormous city, "What is this creature?" it would reply, "It is my little one."

Digitized by Microsoft ®

CHAPTER II.

THE GAMIN'S CHARACTERISTICS.

THE gamin of Paris is the dwarf of the giantess. Let us not exaggerate: this cherub of the gutter has sometimes a shirt, but in that case has only one; he has shoes at times, but then they have no soles; he has at times a home, and likes it, for he finds his mother there; but he prefers the street, because he finds liberty there. He has games of his own, and his own tricks, of which hatred of the respectable class constitutes the basis, and he has metaphors of his own, — thus, to be dead, he calls eating dandelions by the root. He has trades of his own, — fetching hackney coaches, letting down steps, imposing tolls from one side of the street to the other in heavy showers, which he calls making *ponts des arts*, and shouting out speeches made by the authorities in favor of the French people. He has also a currency of his own, composed of all the little pieces of copper that can be picked up in the streets. This curious money, which takes the name of *loques*, has an unvarying and well-established value in this childish Bohemia.

Lastly, he has a fauna of his own, which he studiously observes in every hole and corner, — the Lady-

Digitized by Microsoft®

bird, the death's-head moth, the daddy long-legs, and the "devil," a black insect which threatens by writhing its tail, and which is armed with two horns. He has his fabulous monster, which has scales on its belly and is not a lizard, and spots on its back but is not a frog; it lives in holes in old lime-kilns and dried-up wells; it is black, hairy, slimy, and crawls about, at one moment slowly, at another quickly; it utters no sound, but looks so terrible that no one has ever seen it. This monster he calls *le sourde*, and looking for it under stones is a pleasure of a formidable nature. Another pleasure is suddenly to raise a paving-stone and look at the woodlice. Every region of Paris is interesting for the celebrated "finds" which may be made in them; thus, there are earwigs in the timber-yards of the Ursulines, centipedes at the Panthéon, and tadpoles in the ditches of the Champs de Mars.

As for witticisms, this child is as full of them as Talleyrand; but though no less cynical, he is more honest. He is gifted with an unforeseen joviality, and startles the shop-keeper by his mad laugh. His range extends from genteel comedy to farce. A funeral passes, and among the persons following is a physician. "Hilloh!" shouts a gamin, "when did the doctors begin to carry home their own work?"

Another is in a crowd. A serious man, adorned with spectacles and watch-seals, turns indignantly: "You scoundrel, what do you mean by taking my wife's waist?" "I, sir? Search me!"

Digitized by Microsoft ®

CHAPTER III.

HE IS AGREEABLE.

At night, thanks to a few half-pence which he always contrives to procure, the *homuncio* enters a theatre. On crossing this magical threshold he becomes transfigured; he was a gamin, and he becomes the *titi*. Theatres are like overturned vessels, which have their hold in the air, and the titis congregate in the hold. The titi is to the gamin as the butterfly to the chrysalis, — the same being, but now flying and hovering. It is sufficient for him to be present, with his radiant happiness, his power of enthusiasm and delight, and the clapping of his hands, which resembles the flapping of wings; and the narrow, fetid, obscure, dirty, unhealthy, hideous, abominable hold is at once called Paradise.

Give a being what is useless, and deprive him of what is necessary, and you will have the gamin. He possesses some literary intuition, and his tastes, — we confess it with all proper regret, — are not classical. He is by nature but little of an academician.

This being bawls, shouts, ridicules, and fights; wears patches like a babe, and rags like a philosopher; fishes in the gutter, sports in the sewers, extracts gayety from filth, grins and bites, whistles and sings,

Digitized by Microsoft ®

applauds and hisses, tempers the Hallelujah Chorus with Matanturlurette, hums every known tune, finds without looking, knows what he is ignorant of, is a Spartan in filching, is foolish even to wisdom, is lyrical even to dirt, would squat upon Olympus, wallows on the dungheap and emerges covered with stars. The gamin of Paris is the boy Rabelais.

He is not satisfied with his trousers if they have no watch-pockets.

He is surprised at little, and frightened by less; he sings down superstitions, reduces exaggerations, puts out his tongue at ghosts, depoetizes stilts, and introduces caricature into the most serious affairs. It is not that he is prosaic, far from it; but he substitutes a farcical phantasmagoria for solemn vision. If Adamastor were to appear to him, the gamin would say, "Hilloh, old Bogy!"

Digitized by Microsoft ®

CHAPTER IV.

HE MAY BE USEFUL.

PARIS begins with the badaud and ends with the gamin: two beings of which no other city is capable; the passive acceptance which is satisfied with looking, and the inexhaustible initiative; Prudhomme and Fouillou. Paris alone has that in its natural history: all the monarchy is in the badaud, all the anarchy is in the gamin. This pale child of the faubourgs of Paris lives, and is developed, and grows up in suffering, a thoughtful witness in the presence of social realities and human things. He believes himself reckless, but is not so: he looks on, ready to laugh, but also ready for something else. Whoever you may be who call yourself prejudice, abuses, ignominy, oppression, iniquity, despotism, injustice, fanaticism, or tyranny, take care of the yawning gamin.

This little fellow will grow. Of what clay is he made? Of anything. Take a handful of mud, a breath, and you have Adam. It is sufficient for a God to pass, and God has ever passed over the gamin. Fortune toils for this little being, though by the word fortune we mean to some extent chance. Will this pygmy, moulded in the coarse common clay, ignorant,

Digitized by Microsoft®

uneducated, brutal, violent, and of the populace, be an Ionian or a Bœotian? Wait a while, *dum currit rota*, and the genius of Paris, that demon which creates children of accident and men of destiny, will behave exactly contrary to the Latin potter, and make an amphora out of the earthenware jar.

Digitized by Microsoft ®

CHAPTER V.

HIS CONFINES.

THE gamin loves the town, but he loves solitude as well, for there is something of the sage in him: he is *urbis amator* like Fuscus, and *ruris amator* like Flaccus. To wander about dreamily, that is, to lounge, is an excellent employment of time for the philosopher, particularly in that slightly bastard sort of country, ugly enough, but strange and composed of two natures, that surrounds certain large cities, and notably Paris. Observing the suburbs is looking at an amphibious scene; it is the end of the trees and the beginning of the roofs, the end of the grass and the beginning of the pavement, the end of the furrows and the beginning of the shops, the end of the beaten paths and the beginning of passions, the end of the divine murmur and the beginning of human reason, and all this produces an extraordinary interest; and such is the motive of the apparently objectless walks of the dreamer in those unattractive parts which the passer-by at once brands with the title of "dull."

The author of these lines was for a long time a prowler about the suburbs of Paris, and it is a source of profound recollection for him. The worn grass,

Digitized by Microsoft®

the stony path, the chalk, the marl, the plaster, the rough monotony of ploughed and fallow land, the young market-garden plants suddenly noticed in a hollow, the mixture of the wild and the tame, the vast deserted nooks in which the garrison drummers hold their noisy school, these Thebaïds by day and cut-throat dens by night, the tottering mill turning in the wind, the drawing-wheels of the quarries, the wine-shops at the corners of the cemeteries, the mysterious charm of the tall dark walls cutting at right angles immense open fields bathed in sunshine and full of butterflies, — all this attracted him.

Hardly any one knows those singular spots, — la Glacière, la Cimette, the hideous wall of Grenelle pock-marked with bullets, the Mont Parnasse, the Fosse aux Loups, the Tombe Issoire, or the Pierre Plate de Chatillon, where there is an old exhausted quarry, which is now only employed to grow mushrooms, and is closed by a heap of rotten boards flush with the ground. The Campagna of Rome is an idea, and the banlieue of Paris is another: to see in what an horizon offers us nought but fields, houses, or trees, is to remain on the surface; for all the aspects of things are the thoughts of God. The spot where a plain forms its junction with a town is always imprinted with a species of penetrating melancholy; for nature and humanity address you simultaneously, and local peculiarities make their appearance there.

Any one who has wandered as we have in those solitudes contiguous to our suburbs which might be called the Limbos of Paris has seen here and there, at the most deserted spot, and at the most

Digitized by Microsoft ®

unexpected moment, behind a scrubby hedge, or in the corner of some melancholy wall, children grouped tumultuously, fetid, muddy, dusty, unkempt, and ragged, playing together, wreathed with corn-flowers. They are the little runagates of poor families: this external boulevard is their breathing medium, and the banlieue belongs to them, and they eternally play truant in it. They ingenuously sing there their repertory of unclean songs. They are there, or, to speak more correctly, they dwell there, far from any eye, in the gentle warmth of May or June. Circling round a hole in the ground and snapping marbles, like irresponsible, freed, and happy beings, so soon as they perceive you they remember that they have a trade and must gain their livelihood, and they offer to sell you an old wool stocking full of may-bugs, or a spray of lilac. Such a meeting with chance children is one of the charming and yet poignant graces of the environs of Paris.

Sometimes there are girls among the heap of boys, — are they their sisters? — almost grown up, thin, feverish, sunburnt and freckled, crowned with wheat-ears and poppies, gay, haggard, and barefooted. You may see them eating cherries among the wheat, and at night hear them laugh. These groups, warmly illumined by the bright light of mid-day, or seen in the twilight, for a long time occupy the dreamer, and these visions are mingled with his dreams.

Paris is the centre, the banlieue is the circumference, — that is, the whole earth, for these children. They never venture beyond it, and can no more leave the Parisian atmosphere than fish can live out of

Digitized by Microsoft ®

water. With them there is nothing beyond two leagues from the barrière; Ivry, Gentilly, Arcueil, Belleville, Aubervilliers, Ménilmontant, Choisy le Roi, Bellancourt, Meudon, Issy, Vauvres, Sèvres, Puteaux, Neuilly, Gennevilliers, Colombes, Romainville, Chalon, Asnières, Bougival, Nanterre, Enghien, Noisy-le-sec, Nogent, Gournay, Drancy, and Gonesse, — at these places their universe ends.

Digitized by Microsoft ®

CHAPTER VI.

A BIT OF HISTORY.

At the epoch almost contemporary with the action of this book there was not, as at the present day, a policeman at every street corner (a blessing which we have no time to discuss), and wandering children abounded in Paris. Statistics give us an average of two hundred and sixty shelterless children picked up annually by the police of that day in unenclosed fields, in houses building, and under the arches of bridges. One of these nests, which became famous, produced "the swallows of the Rue d'Arcole." This, by the way, is the most disastrous of social symptoms, for all the crimes of the man begin with the vagabondage of the lad.

We must except Paris, however, and in a relative degree, and in spite of the statistics we have just quoted, the exception is fair. While in any other great city a vagabond child is a ruined man, while nearly everywhere the boy left to himself is to some extent devoted and left to a species of fatal immersion in public vice, which destroys honor and conscience within him, the gamin of Paris, though externally so injured, is internally almost intact. It is a magnificent thing to be able to say, and one re-

Digitized by Microsoft ®

vealed in the splendid probity of our popular revolutions, that a certain incorruptibility emanates from the idea which is in the atmosphere of Paris, as from the salt which is in the ocean water. Breathing Paris preserves the soul.

But what we have just stated does not in any way decrease the heart-contraction which we feel every time we meet one of these lads, around whom we fancy that we can see the threads of the broken family fluttering. In our present civilization, which is still so incomplete, it is not a very abnormal fact that families thus broken up should not know what becomes of their children, and allow their own flesh and blood to fall upon the highway. Hence come these obscure destinies; and this sad thing has become proverbial, and is known as "being cast on the pavement of Paris."

Let us remark parenthetically that such desertion of children was not discouraged by the old monarchy. A little of the Bohemian and Egyptian element in the lower classes suited the higher spheres, and the powerful ones profited by it. Hatred of national education was a dogma; of what good were half-lights? Such was the sentence, and the vagabond boy is the corollary of the ignorant boy. Besides, the monarchy sometimes wanted lads, and then it skimmed the streets. In the reign of Louis XIV., to go no farther back, the King wished, rightly enough, to create a fleet. The idea was good; but let us look at the means. No fleet is possible unless you have by the side of the sailing-vessels, which are the plaything of the winds, vessels which can be sent

Digitized by Microsoft

wherever may be necessary, or be used as tugs, impelled by oars or steam; and in those days galleys were to the navy what steam-vessels now are. Hence galleys were needed; but galleys are only moved through the galley-slave, and hence the latter must be procured. Colbert ordered the Provincial intendants and parliaments to produce as many convicts as they could, and the magistrates displayed great complaisance in the matter. A man kept on his hat when a procession passed; that was a Huguenot attitude, and he was sent to the galleys. A boy was met in the street; provided that he was fifteen years of age and had no place to sleep in, he was sent to the galleys. It was a great reign, a great age.

In the reign of Louis XV. children disappeared in Paris; the police carried them off and no one knew for what mysterious employment. Monstrous conjectures were whispered as to the King's purple baths. It sometimes happened that when boys ran short, the exempts seized such as had parents, and the parents, in their despair, attacked the exempts. In such a case Parliament interfered and hanged — whom, the exempts? No, the fathers.

Digitized by Microsoft ®

CHAPTER VII.

THE GAMIN WOULD HAVE HIS PLACE IN INDIAN CASTES.

THE Parisian gamin almost forms a caste, and we might say that a boy does not become so by wishing. The word *gamin* was printed for the first time, and passed from the populace into literature, in 1834. It made its first appearance in a work called "Claude Gueux." The scandal was great, but the word has remained. The elements that constitute the consideration of gamins among one another are very varied. We knew and petted one, who was greatly respected and admired because he had seen a man fall off the towers of Notre Dame; another, because he had managed to enter the back-yard in which the statues of the dome of the Invalides were temporarily deposited, and steal lead off them; another, because he had seen a diligence upset; another, because he knew a soldier who had all but put out the eye of a civilian. This explains the exclamation of the Parisian gamin, at which the vulgar laughed without understanding its depth: "Dieu de Dieu! how unlucky I am! Just think that I never saw anybody fall from a fifth floor!" Assuredly it was a neat remark of the peasant's: "Father So-and-so, your wife has died of her illness: why did you not send for a doctor?"—

Digitized by Microsoft ®

"What would you have, sir? We poor people die of ourselves." But if all the passiveness of the peasant is contained in this remark, all the free-thinking anarchy of the faubourien will be found in the following: A man condemned to death is listening to the confessor in the cart, and the child of Paris protests, — "He is talking to the skull-cap. Oh, the capon!"

A certain boldness in religious matters elevates the gamin, and it is important for him to be strong-minded. Being present at executions is a duty with him. He points at the guillotine and laughs at it, and calls it by all sorts of pet names, — end of the soup; the grumbler; the sky-blue mother; the last mouthful, etc. In order to lose none of the sight, he climbs up walls, escalades balconies, mounts trees, hangs to gratings, and clings to chimney-pots. A gamin is born to be a slater, as another is to be a sailor, and he is no more frightened at a roof than at a mast. No holiday is equal to the Grève, and Samson and the Abbé Montes are the real popular fêtes. The sufferer is hooted to encourage him, and is sometimes admired. Lacenaire, when a gamin, seeing the frightful Dautrem die bravely, uttered a remark which contained his future, — "I was jealous of him." In gamindom Voltaire is unknown, but Papavoine is famous. Politicians and murderers are mingled in the same legend, and traditions exist as to the last garments of all. They know that Tolleron had a nightcap on, Avril a fur cap, Louvel a round hat; that old Delaporte was bald and bareheaded, Castaing rosy-cheeked and good-looking, and that Boriès had a romantic beard; Jean Martin kept his braces

Digitized by Microsoft®

on, and Lecouffé and his mother abused each other. "Don't quarrel about your basket," a gamin shouted to them. Another little fellow climbed up a lamp-post on the quay, in order to watch Debacker pass, and a gendarme posted there frowned at him. "Let me climb up, M'sieu le Gendarme;" and to soften the man in authority, he added, — "I shall not fall." "What do I care whether you fall or not?" the gendarme replied.

Among the gamins a memorable accident is highly esteemed, and a lad attains the summit of consideration if he give himself a deep cut "to the bone." The fist is no small element of success, and one of the things which a gamin is very fond of saying is, "I am precious strong." To be left-handed renders you enviable, while squinting is held in great esteem.

Digitized by Microsoft ®

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHARMING ANECDOTE OF THE LAST KING.

In summer he is metamorphosed into a frog, and from afternoon to nightfall, before the Austerlitz and Jena bridges, from the top of coal-rafts and washer-women's boats, dives into the Seine, with all possible infractions of the laws of decency and of the police. Still, the police are on the watch, and hence results a highly dramatic situation, which once gave rise to a paternal and memorable cry. This cry, which became celebrated about 1830, is a strategic warning from gamin to gamin; it can be scanned like a verse of Homer, with a notation almost as indescribable as the Eleusiac song of the Panathenæa, in which the ancient Evohé may be traced, — "Ohe, Titi, ohéée, here 's the sergeant, pack up your traps, and be off through the sewer!"

Sometimes this gad-fly — that is the name he gives himself — can read, sometimes he can write, and draw after a fashion. He does not hesitate to acquire, by some mysterious mutual instruction, all the talents which may be useful to the public cause. From 1815 to 1830 he imitated the cry of a turkey; from 1830 to 1848 he drew a pear upon the walls. One summer evening, Louis Philippe, returning home on foot, saw a very little scamp struggling to raise himself high enough to draw with charcoal a gigan-

Digitized by Microsoft ®

tic pear on the pillar of the Neuilly gates, and the King, with that kindness which he inherited from Henri IV., helped the gamin to finish the pear and gave him a louis, saying, "The pear is on that too." The gamin likes a commotion, and any violent condition pleases him. He execrates the curés. One day in the Rue de l'Université, one of these young scamps put his finger to his nose in front of the driveway of No. 69. "Why are you doing that at that gate?" a passer-by asked him. The lad answered, "A curé lives there." The Papal Nuncio in fact resided there. Still, however great the gamin's Voltairianism may be, if the opportunity is offered him of being a chorister, he may possibly accept, and in that case assists civilly at mass. There are two things of which he is the Tantalus, and which he constantly desires without ever being able to attain them, — to overthrow the government and have his trousers reseated. The gamin in a perfect state is acquainted with all the police of Paris, and when he meets one, can always give a name to his face. He numbers them on his fingers, studies their names, and has his special notes about each. He reads the minds of the police like an open book, and will say curiously and without hesitating, — "So-and-so is a *traitor*, So-and-so is *very wicked*, So-and-so is *great*, So-and-so is *ridiculous*" (the italicized words have all a peculiar meaning in his mouth). This one believes that the Pont Neuf belongs to him, and prevents *the world* from walking on the cornice outside the parapet; another has a mania for pulling the ears of *persons*, etc. etc.

Digitized by Microsoft ®

CHAPTER IX.

THE OLD SOUL OF GAUL.

THIS lad may be traced in Poquelin, a son of the Halles, and again in Beaumarchais; for gaminerie is a tinge of the Gallic temper. When blended with common sense, it at times adds strength, in the same way as alcohol when mixed with wine; at other times it is a fault. Homer, it is true, repeats himself, and we might say that Voltaire plays the gamin. Camille Desmoulins was a faubourien. Championnet, who abused miracles, issued from the pavement of Paris; when quite a lad, he "inundated the porticos" of St. Jean de Beauvais and St. Étienne du Mont, and was on such familiar terms with the shrine of Saint Geneviève as eventually to give his orders to the vial of Saint Januarius.

The Parisian gamin is respectful, ironical, and insolent. He has bad teeth because he is badly fed and his stomach suffers, and fine eyes because he has talent. He would hop up the steps of Paradise in the very presence of Jehovah. He is clever at the savate, and all creeds are possible to him. He plays in the gutter, and draws himself up at the sound of an émeute; his effrontery cannot be subdued by grape-shot; he was a vagabond and becomes a hero,

Digitized by Microsoft®

and, like the little Theban, he shakes the lion's skin. Barra the drummer was a Parisian gamin; he shouted, "Forward!" and in an instant became a giant. This child of the mud is also the child of the ideal; to see this we need only measure the distance between Molière and Barra.

In a word, the gamin is a being who amuses himself because he is unhappy.

Digitized by Microsoft ®

CHAPTER X.

ECCE PARIS, ECCE HOMO.

THE gamin of Paris at the present day, like the Græculus of Rome in former time, is the youthful people with the wrinkle of the old world on its forehead. The gamin is a grace for a nation, and at the same time a malady, — a malady which must be cured. In what way? By light; for light is sanitary and illumining.

All the generous social irradiations issue from science, letters, the arts, and instruction. Make men, make men. Enlighten them in order that they may warm you. Sooner or later the splendid question of universal instruction will be asked with the irresistible authority of absolute truth; and then those who govern under the surveillance of French ideas will have to make a choice between children of France and gamins of Paris, between flames in light and will-o'-the-wisps in the darkness.

The gamin expresses Paris, and Paris expresses the world. For Paris is a total; it is the ceiling of the human race, and the whole of this prodigious city is an epitome of dead manners and living manners. The man who sees Paris imagines that he sees universal history, with sky and constellations in

Digitized by Microsoft®

the intervals. Paris has a Capitol, the Town Hall; a Parthenon, Notre Dame; a Mons Aventinus, the Faubourg St. Antoine; an Asinarium, the Sorbonne; a Pantheon, the Panthéon; a Via Sacra, the Boulevard des Italians; a Tower of the Winds, public opinion; and ridicule has been substituted for the Gemoniæ. Its majo is called the "faraud," its Transteverine is called the faubourien, its hammal the "fort de la Halle," its lazzarone the "pegre," and its cockney the "Gandin." All that is elsewhere is in Paris. Dumarsais' fish-fag can give a reply to the herb-seller of Euripides; Vejanus the discobolus lives again in the rope-dancer Forioso; Therapontigonus Miles could walk arm-in-arm with Grenadier Vadcboneœur; Damasippus the broker would be happy among the dealers in *bric-à-brac;* Vinecnnes would hold Socrates under lock, just as the Agora would pounce on Diderot; Grimod de la Reynière discovered roast-beef with tallow, in the same way as Curtillus invented roast hedgehog. We have seen the trapeze of which we read in Plautus reappear under the balloon of the Arc de l'Étoile; the sword-swallower of Pœcile met by Apuleius is a swallower of sabres on the Pont Neuf; Rameau's nephew and Curculion the parasite form a pair; Ergasites would have himself introduced to Cambaceres by d'Aigre feuille; the four fops of Rome, Alcesimarchus, Phœdromus, Dicabolus, and Argiryppus descend the Courtille in Labatut's post-chaise; Aulus Gellius stopped before Congrio no longer than Charles Nodier did before Punchinello; Marton is not a tigress, but Pardalisca was not a dragon.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Pantolabus humbugs Nomentamus the gourmet at the Café Anglais; Hermogenes is the Tenor in the Champs Élysées, and Thrasius the beggar, dressed as Bobéche, carries round the hat for him; the troublesome fellow who catches hold of your coat-button in the Tuileries makes you repeat after two thousand years the apostrophe of Thesperon, — *Quis properantem me prehendit pallio?* The wine of Suresne is a parody of the wine of Alba; Père Lachaise exhales in the night showers the same gleams as the Esquiliæ; and the poor man's grave bought for five years is quite equal to the hired coffin of the slave.

Seek for anything which Paris has not. The tub of Trophonius contains nothing which is not in Mesmer's trough; Ergaphilas is resuscitated in Cagliostro; the Brahmin Vasaphanta is incarcerated in the Count de St. Germain; and the cemetery of Saint Médard performs quite as good miracles as the Oumoumie Mosque at Damascus. Paris has an Æsop in Mayeux, and a Canidia in Mademoiselle Lenormand; it is startled as Delphi was by the flaming realities of the vision; it makes tables turn as Dodona did tripods; it places a grisette upon a throne as Rome placed a courtesan; and, after all, if Louis XV. is worse than Claudius, Madame Dubarry is better than Messalina. Paris combines in an extraordinary type what has lived and what we have elbowed, — Greek nudity, the Hebrew ulcer, and Gascon puns. It mixes up Diogenes, Job, and Paillasse, dresses a ghost in old numbers of the *Constitutionnel*, and makes Chodrucnito a Duclos.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Although Plutarch says that "the tyrant never goes to sleep," Rome, under Sylla as under Domitian, was resigned, and liked to mix water with its wine. The Tiber was a Lethe, if we may believe the somewhat doctrinaire eulogium which Varus Vibiscus made of it: *Contra Gracchos Tiberim habemus. Bibere Tiberim, id est seditionem oblivisci.* Paris drinks a million quarts of water a day; but that does not prevent it from beating the tattoo and ringing the alarm-bell when the opportunity offers.

With this exception, Paris is good-natured. It accepts everything royally; it is not difficult in the matter of its Venus; its Callipyge is a Hottentot; provided that it laughs, it forgives; ugliness amuses it, deformity does it good, and vice distracts it; if you are droll you may be a scoundrel; even hypocrisy, that supreme cynicism, does not revolt it; it is so literary that it does not hold its nose on passing Basile, and is no more scandalized by Tartuffe's prayer than Horace was terrified by the "hiccough" of Priapus. No feature of the human face is wanting in the profile of Paris; the Mabille ball is not the Polyhymnian dance of the Janiculum, but the wardrobe-dealer has her eyes fixed on the Lorette there, exactly as the procuress Staphyla watched the Virgin Planesium. The Barrière des Combats is not a Coliseum, but people are as ferocious there as if Cæsar were looking on. The Syrian hostess has more grace than Mother Saguet; but if Virgil frequented the Roman wine-shop, David of Angers, Balzac, and Charlet have seated themselves in Parisian pot-houses. Paris reigns, geniuses flash in it, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

red-tails prosper. Adonaïs passes through it in his twelve-wheeled car of thunder and lightning, and Silenus makes his entrance on his barrel. For Silenus read Ramponneau.

Paris is the synonym of Cosmos; Paris is Athens, Rome, Sybaris, Jerusalem, and Pantin. All civilizations are found there abridged, but so are all barbarisms. Paris would be very sorry not to have a guillotine; a little of the Place de Grève is useful, for what would this eternal festival be without that seasoning? The laws have wisely provided for that, and, thanks to them, the knife drains drops of blood upon this Mardi-Gras.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XI.

THE REIGN OF RIDICULE.

THERE are no limits to Paris; and no other city has held this sway, which at times derides those whom it holds in subjection. "To please you, O Athenians!" Alexander exclaimed. Paris makes more than the law, for it sets the fashion; and it makes more than fashion, for it produces routine. Paris may be stupid, if it think proper; at times it indulges in that luxury, and then the universe is stupid with it; but Paris soon wakes up, rubs its eyes, says, "How stupid I am!" and laughs in the face of the human race. What a marvel such a city is! How strange it is to find this grandeur and this buffoonery side by side; to see how all this majesty is not deranged by this parody, and the same mouth to-day blowing the trumpet of the last judgment, and to-morrow a penny whistle! Paris has a sovereign gayety; but the gayety is lightning, and its farce holds a sceptre. Its hurricane at times issues from a furnace; its explosions, its days, its masterpieces, its prodigies, its epics, go to the end of the world, and so do its cock-and-bull tales. Its laugh is the crater of a volcano which bespatters the world, and its jokes are sparks of fire. It imposes upon nations its caricatures as well as its ideal, and the

Digitized by Microsoft®

loftiest monuments of human civilization accept its ironies and lend their eternity to its jokes. It is superb; it has a prodigious July 14, which delivers the globe; its night of August 4 dissolves in three hours a thousand years of feudalism; it makes with its logic the muscle of the unanimous will; it multiplies itself in every form of sublimity; it fills with its lustre Washington, Kosciusko, Bolivar, Bozzaris, Riégo, Bem, Manin, Lopez, John Brown, and Garibaldi. It is found wherever the future bursts into a flash, — at Boston in 1779, at the Isle of Leon in 1820, at Pesth in 1848, at Palermo in 1860; it whispers the powerful watchword "Liberty" in the ear of the American abolitionists assembled at Harper's Ferry, and in that of the patriots of Ancona assembled in the darkness before the Gozzi inn, on the sea-shore; it creates Canaris, it creates Quiroga, it creates Pisacane, it radiates grandeur upon the earth; it was by going whither its blast impelled him that Byron died at Missolonghi, and Mazet at Barcelona; it is a tribune under the feet of Mirabeau, and a crater under those of Robespierre; its books, plays, art, science, literature, and philosophy are the manuals of the human race; it has Pascal, Regnier, Corneille, Descartes, and Jean Jacques; Voltaire for any moment, Molière for all ages; it makes the universal mouth speak its language; it constructs in every mind the idea of progress; the liberating dogmas which it fuses are well-tried friends for generations, and it is with the mind of its thinkers and its poets that all the heroes of all nations have been formed since 1789. Still, this does not prevent

Digitized by Microsoft®

it from playing the gamin; and the enormous genius which is called Paris, while transfiguring the world with its light, draws Bouginier's nose with charcoal on the wall of the Temple of Theseus, and writes Crédeville Voleur upon the Pyramids.

Paris constantly shows its teeth, and when it is not scolding it is laughing; such is Paris. The smoke from its chimneys constitutes the ideas of the universe; it is a pile of mud and stones if you like, but it is, before all, a moral being. It is more than grand, it is immense; and why? Because it dares. Daring is the price paid for progress. All sublime contests are more or less the rewards of boldness. For the Revolution to take place, it was not enough that Montesquieu should foresee it, Diderot preach it, Beaumarchais announce it, Condorcet calculate it, Arouet prepare it, and Rousseau premeditate it,—it was necessary that Danton should dare it.

The cry "Audace!" is a *Fiat lux.* In order that the human race may progress, it must have proved lessons of courage permanently before it. Rashness dazzles history, and is one of the great brightnesses of man. The dawn dares when it breaks. To attempt, to brave, persist, and persevere, to be faithful to one's self, to wrestle with destiny, to astound the catastrophe by the slight fear which it causes us, at one moment to confront unjust power, at another to insult intoxicated victory, to hold firm and withstand,—such is the example which people need and which electrifies them. The same formidable flash goes from the torch of Prometheus to the short clay pipe of Cambronne.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XII.

THE FUTURE LATENT IN THE PEOPLE.

As for the Parisian people, even when full grown, it is always the gamin. Depicting the lad is depicting the city, and that is the reason why we have studied the eagle in the sparrow.

The Parisian race, we say again, is found most truly in the faubourg; there it is pure-blooded, there we find the real physiognomy, there the people work and suffer, and toil and suffering are the two faces of the man. There are there immense numbers of strange beings, among whom may be found the wildest types, from the porter of la Râpée to the quarryman of Montfauçon. *Fæx urbis,* Cicero exclaims; "Mob," Burke adds, indignantly; a crowd, a multitude, a population, — these words are quickly uttered; but no matter! what do I care that they go about barefoot? They cannot read; all the worse. Will you abandon them on that account? Will you convert their distress into a curse? Cannot light penetrate these masses? Let us revert to that cry of light, and insist upon it. Light, light! who knows whether this opaqueness may not become transparent? For are not revolutions themselves transfigurations? Come, philosophers, teach, enlighten, illumine, think aloud,

Digitized by Microsoft®

speak loudly, run joyfully into the sunshine, fraternize with the public places, announce the glad tidings, spread alphabets around, proclaim the right, sing the Marseillaise, sow enthusiasm, and pluck green branches from the oaks. Make a whirlwind of the idea. This crowd may be sublimated, so let us learn how to make use of that vast conflagration of principles and virtues which crackles and bursts into a flame at certain hours. These bare feet, these naked arms, these rags, this ignorance, this abjectness, this darkness, may be employed for the conquest of the ideal. Look through the people, and you will perceive the truth; the vile sand which you trample under foot, when cast into the furnace and melted will become splendid crystal, and by its aid Galileo and Newton discover planets.

Digitized by Microsoft ®

CHAPTER XIII.

LITTLE GAVROCHE.

EIGHT or nine years after the events recorded in the second portion of this story, there might be noticed on the Boulevard du Temple and in the regions of the Château d'Eau, a boy of about eleven or twelve years of age, who would have tolerably well realized the ideal of a gamin as sketched above, had he not had, with the smile of his age on his lips, a heart absolutely gloomy and void. This child was dressed in a man's trousers, but he had not got them from his father, and a woman's jacket, which did not come from his mother. Some persons had clothed him in rags out of charity. Yet he had a father and a mother, but his father did not think of him and his mother did not love him. He was one of those children worthy of pity before all, who have father and mother and are orphans.

This child was never so comfortable anywhere as in the street, for the paving-stones were less hard to him than his mother's heart. His parents had kicked him out into life, and he had simply tried his wings. He was a noisy, pale, active, sharp, impudent lad, with a cunning and sickly look. He came and went, sang, played at hop-scotch, searched the gutters,

Digitized by Microsoft®

pilfered a little, but gayly, like cats and sparrows, laughed when he was called a scamp, and felt angry when called a thief. He had no bed, no bread, no fire, no love: but he was happy because he was free. When these poor beings are men, the mill of social order nearly always crushes them: but so long as they are children they escape because they are small. The slightest hole saves them.

Still, abandoned as this child was, it happened every two or three months that he said, — "Well, I 'll go and see mamma." Then he quitted the boulevard, the circus, the Porte St. Martin, went along the quay, crossed the bridge, reached the Salpêtrière, and arrived where? Exactly at that double No. 50–52, which the reader knows, — the Maison Gorbeau. At this period No. 50–52, which was habitually deserted and eternally decorated with a bill of "Lodgings to Let," was, strange to say, inhabited by several persons who had no acquaintance with each other, as is always the case in Paris. All belonged to that indigent class which begins with the last small tradesman in difficulties, and is prolonged from wretchedness to wretchedness to those two beings to whom all the material things of civilization descend, — the scavenger and the rag-picker.

The chief lodger of Jean Valjean's day was dead, and her place had been taken by another exactly like her. I forget now what philosopher said, "There is never any want of old women." This new old woman was called Madame Burgon, and had nothing remarkable in her life save a dynasty of three parrots, which had successively reigned over her soul. The

Digitized by Microsoft®

most wretched of all the persons inhabiting the house were a family of four persons, father, mother, and two nearly grown-up daughters, all four living in the same attic, one of the cells to which we have alluded.

This family offered at the first glance nothing very peculiar beyond its poverty; and the father, on hiring the room, stated that his name was Jondrette. A short time after he moved in, which had borne a striking resemblance — to employ the memorable remark of the chief lodger — to the coming in of nothing at all, this Jondrette had said to the woman, who, like her predecessor, was also portress and swept the stairs, "Mother So-and-so, if any one were to ask by chance for a Pole, or an Italian, or perhaps a Spaniard, I am the party."

This was the family of the merry little vagabond. He joined it, and found distress, and, what is sadder still, not a smile; a cold hearth and cold heart. When he entered, they asked him, "Where do you come from?" and he answered, "From the street:" when he went away, "Where are you going?" and he answered, "To the street." His mother would say to him, "What do you want here?" The boy lived in this absence of affection like the pale grass which grows in cellars. He was not hurt by its being so, and was not angry with any one: he did not know exactly how a father and mother ought to be. Moreover, his mother loved his sisters.

We have forgotten to mention that on the boulevard the lad was called Little Gavroche. Why was he called Gavroche? Probably because his father's

Digitized by Microsoft®

name was Jondrette. Breaking the thread seems the instinct of some wretched families. The room which the Jondrettes occupied at the Maison Gorbeau was the last in the passage, and the cell next to it was occupied by a very poor young man of the name of Monsieur Marius. Let us state who this Monsieur Marius was.

Digitized by Microsoft®

BOOK II.

LE GRAND BOURGEOIS.

CHAPTER I.

NINETY YEARS AND TWO-AND-THIRTY TEETH.

THERE are still a few persons residing in the Rue Boucherat, Rue de Normandie, and Rue de Saintonge, who can remember a gentleman of the name of M. Gillenormand, and speak kindly about him. This good man was old when they were young. This profile has not entirely disappeared, with those who look sadly at the vague congregation of shadows called the past, from the labyrinth of streets near the Temple, which in the reign of Louis XIV. received the names of all the provinces of France, exactly in the same way as in our time the names of all the capitals of Europe have been given to the streets in the new Tivoli quarter; a progression, by the bye, in which progress is visible.

M. Gillenormand, who was most lively in 1831, was one of those men who have become curious to look on solely because they have lived a long time, and are strange because they once resembled everybody and now no longer resemble any one. He was a peculiar old man, and most certainly the man

Digitized by Microsoft®

of another age, the genuine, perfect bourgeois of the 18th century, who carried his honest old bourgeoisie with the same air as Marquises did their marquisate. He had passed his ninetieth year, walked upright, talked loudly, saw clearly, drank heartily, and ate, slept, and snored. He still had his two-and-thirty teeth, and only wore spectacles to read with. He was of an amorous temper, but said that for the last ten years he had decidedly and entirely given up the sex. "He could not please," he said: and he did not add "I am too old," but "I am too poor. If I were not ruined — he, he, he!" In fact, all that was left him was an income of about fifteen thousand francs. His dream was to make a large inheritance, and have one hundred thousand francs a year, in order to keep mistresses. As we see, he did not belong to that weak variety of octogenarians, who, like M. de Voltaire, were dying all their life; his longevity was not that of the cracked jug, and this jolly old gentleman had constantly enjoyed good health. He was superficial, rapidly and easily angered, and he would storm at the slightest thing, most usually an absurd trifle. When he was contradicted, he raised his cane and thrashed his people, as folk used to do in the great age. He had a daughter, upwards of fifty years of age and unmarried, whom he gave a hearty thrashing to when he was in a passion, and whom he would have liked to whip, for he fancied her eight years of age. He boxed his servant's ears energetically, and would say, "Ah, carrion!" One of his oaths was, "By the *pantoflouche* of the *pantouflochade!*" His tranquillity

Digitized by Microsoft®

was curious; he was shaved every morning by a barber who had been mad and who detested him, for he was jealous of M. Gillenormand on account of his wife, who was a pretty little coquette. M. Gillenormand admired his own discernment in everything, and declared himself extremely sagacious. Here is one of his remarks, — "I have in truth some penetration. I am able to say, when a flea bites me, from what woman I caught it." The words he employed most frequently were "the sensitive man" and "nature," but he did not give to the latter word the vast acceptation of our age. But there was a certain amount of homeliness in his satirical remarks. "Nature," he would say, "anxious that civilization may have a little of everything, even gives it specimens of amusing barbarism. Europe has specimens of Asia and Africa in a reduced size; the cat is a drawing-room tiger, the lizard a pocket crocodile. The ballet girls at the opera are pink savages; they do not eat men, but they live on them: the little magicians change them into oysters and swallow them. The Caribs only leave the bones, and they only leave the shells. Such are our manners; we do not devour, but we nibble; we do not exterminate, but we scratch."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER II.

LIKE MASTER, LIKE HOME.

He lived in the Marais, at No. 6 Rue des Filles de Calvaire, and the house belonged to him. This house has since been pulled down and rebuilt, and the number has probably been changed in the numbering revolutions which the streets of Paris undergo. He occupied an old and vast suite of rooms on the first floor, furnished up to the ceiling with large Gobelins and Beauvais tapestry, representing shepherd scenes; the subjects of the ceiling and panels were repeated in miniature upon the chairs. He surrounded his bed with an immense screen of Coromandel lacquer-work; long curtains hung from the windows, and made very splendid, large, broken folds. The garden immediately under the windows was reached by a flight of twelve or fifteen steps running from one of them, which the old gentleman went up and down very nimbly. In addition to a library adjoining his bed-room, he had a boudoir, which he was very fond of, a gallant withdrawing-room hung with a magnificent fleur-de-lysed tapestry, made in the galleys of Louis XIV., which M. de Vivonne had ordered of his convicts for his mistress. M. Gillenormand inherited this from a stern maternal

Digitized by Microsoft®

great-aunt, who died at the age of one hundred. He had had two wives. His manners were midway between those of the courtier, which he had never been, and of the barrister, which he might have been. He was gay and pleasing when he liked; in his youth he had been one of those men who are always deceived by their wives and never by their mistresses, because they are at once the most disagreeable husbands and the most charming lovers imaginable. He was a connoisseur of pictures, and had in his bed-room a marvellous portrait of somebody unknown, painted by Jordaens with bold strokes of the brush, and with an infinitude of details. M. Gillenormand's coat was not in the style of Louis XV. or even Louis XVI., but it was in the style of the exquisites of the Directory. He had believed himself quite a youth at that time, and followed the fashions. His coat was of light cloth with large cuffs, a long codfish tail, and large steel buttons. Add to these knee-breeches and buckle-shoes. He always had his hands in his fobs, and said authoritatively, "The French Revolution is a collection of ruffians."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER III.

LUC ESPRIT.

At the age of sixteen, when at the opera one night, he had the honor of being examined simultaneously by two beauties, at that time, celebrated and sung by Voltaire, — la Camargo, and la Salle. Caught between two fires, he beat an heroic retreat towards a little dancing-girl of the name of Naheury, sixteen years of age, like himself, obscure as a cat, of whom he was enamoured. He abounded in recollections, and would exclaim, "How pretty that Guimard-Guimardini-Guimardinette was, the last time I saw her at Longchamps, with her hair dressed in 'sustained feelings,' her 'come and see them' of turquoises, her dress of the color of 'newly-arrived people,' and her muff of 'agitation.'" He had worn in his youth a jacket of Nain-Londeur, to which he was fond of alluding: "I was dressed like a Turk of the Levantine Levant." Madame Boufflers, seeing him accidentally when he was twenty years of age, declared him to be "a charming madcap." He was scandalized at all the names he saw in politics and power, and considered them low and bourgeois. He read the journals, the *newspapers*, the *gazettes*, as he called them, and burst into a

Digitized by Microsoft ®

laugh. "Oh!" he would say, "who are these people? Corbière! Humann! Casimir Périer! There's a ministry for you! I can imagine this in a paper, — M. Gillenormand, Minister; it would be a farce, but they are so stupid that it might easily happen." He lightly called everything by its proper or improper name, and was not checked by the presence of ladies; and he uttered coarseness, obscenity, and filth with a peculiarly calm and slightly amazed accent in which was elegance. Such was the loose manner of the age. It is to be remarked that the season of circumlocution in verse was that of crudities in prose. His grandfather had predicted that he would be a man of genius, and gave him the two significant Christian names, Luc Esprit.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER IV.

AN ASPIRING CENTENARIAN.

He gained prizes in his youth at the college of Moulins, in which town he was born, and was crowned by the hand of the Duc de Nivernais, whom he called the Duc de Nevers. Neither the Convention, the death of Louis XVI., Napoleon, nor the return of the Bourbons, had effaced the recollection of this coronation. The Duc de Nevers was to him the grand figure of the age. "What a charming nobleman!" he would say, "and how well his blue ribbon became him! In the eyes of M. Gillenormand, Catherine II. repaired the crime of the division of Poland by purchasing of Bestucheff, for three thousand roubles, the secret of the elixir of gold, and on this point he would grow animated. "The elixir of gold!" he would exclaim. "Bestucheff's yellow tincture and the drops of General Lamotte were, in the 18th century, at one louis the half-ounce bottle, the grand remedy for love catastrophes, the panacea against Venus. Louis XV. sent two hundred bottles of it to the Pope." He would have been greatly exasperated had he been told that the gold elixir is nothing but perchloride of iron. M. Gillenormand adored the Bourbons,

Digitized by Microsoft®

and held 1789 in horror; he incessantly described in what way he had escaped during the Reign of Terror, and how he had been obliged to display great gayety and wit in order not to have his head cut off. If any young man dared in his presence to praise the Republic, he turned blue, and grew so angry as almost to faint. Sometimes he alluded to his ninety years, and said, "I trust that I shall not see ninety-three twice." At other times, he informed persons that he intended to live to be a hundred.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER V.

BASQUE AND NICOLETTE.

He had his theories; here is one of them: "When a man passionately loves women, and himself has a wife for whom he cares little, — a wife that is ugly, legitimate, full of her rights, reliant on the Code, and jealous when she likes to be so, he has only one way of getting out of the hobble and living at peace; it is to leave his purse-strings to his wife. This abdication renders him free; the wife is henceforth occupied, grows passionately fond of handling specie, verdigrises her fingers, undertakes to instruct the peasants and train the farmers, harangues the notaries, visits their offices, follows the course of lawsuits, draws up leases, dictates contracts, knows she is absolute, sells, buys, regulates, orders, promises and compromises, yields, concedes and recedes, arranges, deranges, saves, and squanders; she commits follies, and this affords her supreme personal pleasure and consolation. While her husband disregards her she has the satisfaction of ruining her husband." This theory M. Gillenormand applied to himself, and it became his history. His wife, the second one, managed his fortune in such a manner that one fine day when he found himself a

Digitized by Microsoft®

widower, he had just enough to live on, by buying an annuity, three fourths of which would expire with him. He had not hesitated, for he did not care much about leaving anything to his heir, and, besides, he had seen that patrimonies had their adventures, and, for instance, became "National Property;" he had seen the avatars of the three per cent consols, and put but little faith in the great Book. "All that is Rue Quincampoix!" he would say. His house in the Rue des Filles du Calvaire belonged, as we stated, to him, and he had two servants, "a he and a she." When a servant came into his house M. Gillenormand rechristened him, and gave the men the name of their province, Nîmois, Comtois, Poitevin, or Picard. His last valet was a fat cunning man of fifty-five, incapable of running twenty yards; but as he was born at Bayonne, M. Gillenormand called him Basque. As for the maid-servants, he called them all Nicolette (even la Magnon, to whom we shall allude directly). One day a bold cook, a Cordon Bleu, of the proud concierge race, presented herself. "What wages do you expect a month?" M. Gillenormand asked her. "Thirty francs." "What is your name?" "Olympie." "I will give you forty, and call you Nicolette."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VI.

MAGNON AND HER TWO LITTLE ONES.

In Gillenormand sorrow was translated into choler; he was furious at being in despair. He had every prejudice and took every license. One of the things of which he composed his external relief and internal satisfaction was, as we have indicated, having remained a gay fellow, and passing energetically for such. He called this having a "royal renown," but this renown at times brought him into singular scrapes. One day a big baby, wrapped in rags and crying lustily, was brought to him in a basket, which a maid-servant, discharged six months previously, attributed to him. M. Gillenormand was at that time past his eighty-fourth year, and people around him became indignant and clamorous. "Does the impudent wench expect to make anybody believe this? What audacity! What an abominable calumny!" M. Gillenormand, however, did not feel at all angry. He looked at the brat with the amiable smile of a man flattered by the calumny, and said to the company, "Well, what is the matter? Is there anything so wonderful in it, that you should stand there like stuck pigs and display your ignorance? M. le Duc d'Angoulême, bastard of his Majesty Charles IX.,

Digitized by Microsoft®

married at the age of eighty-five a girl of fifteen; Monsieur Virginal, Marquis d'Alleuze, and brother of Cardinal de Sourdis, Archbishop of Bordeaux, had at the age of eighty-three by the lady's-maid of Madame Jacquin, the President's wife, a genuine love-child, who was a Knight of Malta, and Member of the Privy Council. One of the great men of this age, Abbé Tabaraud, is the son of a man of eighty-seven years of age. These things are common enough. And then take the Bible! After this, I declare that this little gentleman is none of mine; but take care of him, for it is not his fault." The creature, the aforesaid Magnon, sent him a second parcel the next year, also a boy, and M. Gillenormand thought it time to capitulate. He sent the two brats to their mother, agreeing to pay eighty francs a month for their support, but on condition that the mother was not to begin again. He added, "I expect that the mother will treat them well, and I shall go and see them now and then," which he did. He had a brother, a priest, who was for three-and-thirty years Rector of the Poitiers academy, and died at the age of seventy-nine. "I lost him when quite young," he would say. This brother, who is not much remembered, was a great miser, who, as he was a priest, thought himself bound to give alms to the poor he met, but he never gave them aught but bad or called-in money, thus finding means of going to Hades by the road to Paradise. As for M. Gillenormand the elder, he gave alms readily and handsomely; he was benevolent, brusque, and charitable, and had he been rich his downfall would have been magnifi-

Digitized by Microsoft®

cent. He liked everything that concerned him to be done grandly; even when he was swindled one day, having been plundered in the matter of an inheritance by a man of business in a clumsy and obvious manner, he made the solemn remark, "Sir, that was done very awkwardly, and I feel ashamed of such clumsiness. Everything has degenerated in this age, even the swindlers. Morbleu! a man of my stamp ought not to be robbed in that way; I was plundered as if I were in a wood, but badly plundered, *sylvæ sint consule dignæ!*" He had married twice, as we said; by his first wife he had a girl, who remained an old maid, and by the second another girl, who died at the age of thirty, and who married through love, or chance, or otherwise, a soldier of fortune who had served in the armies of the Republic and the Empire, won the cross at Austerlitz, and his colonel's commission at Waterloo. "He is the disgrace of my family," the old gentleman used to say. He took a great deal of snuff, and had a peculiarly graceful way of shaking his shirt-frill with the back of his hand. He believed very little in God.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VII.

RULE: NO ONE RECEIVED UNTIL EVENING.

Such was M. Luc Esprit Gillenormand, who had not lost his hair, which was rather gray than white, and always wore it in dog's ears, — altogether venerable. He was a man of the 18th century, frivolous and great. In 1814, and the early years of the Restoration, M. Gillenormand, who was still a youth, — he was only seventy-four, — resided in the Rue Sirvandoni, Faubourg St. Germain. He only retired to the Marais on leaving society, that is to say, long after his eightieth year, and on leaving the world he immured himself in his habits; the chief one, and in that he was invariable, was to keep his door closed by day and receive nobody, no matter the nature of his business, till night. He dined at five, and then his door was thrown open; it was the fashion of his century, and he did not like to give it up. "Day is low," he would say, "and only deserves closed shutters." People of fashion light up their wit when the zenith illumines its stars, and he barricaded himself against everybody, even had it been the King; such was old-time elegance.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO DO NOT MAKE A PAIR.

As for M. Gillenormand's two daughters, they were born at an interval of ten years. In their youth they had been very little alike, and both in character and face were as little sisters as was possible. The younger was a charming creature, who turned to the light, loved flowers, poetry, and music, was enthusiastic, ethereal, and mentally betrothed from her youth up to some heroic figure. The elder had her chimera too; she saw in the azure an army-contractor, some fat and very rich man, a splendidly stupid husband, a million converted into a man, or else a prefect; the reception at the prefecture, an usher in the ante-room with a chain round his neck, the official balls, the addresses at the mansion-house to be "Madame la Prefête," — all this buzzed in her imagination. The two sisters wandered each in her own reverie, at the period when they were girls, and both had wings, — the one those of an angel, the other those of a goose.

No ambition is fully realized, at least not in this nether world, and no paradise becomes earthly in our age. The younger married the man of her dreams, but she was dead, while the elder did not marry.

Digitized by Microsoft®

At the period when she enters into our narrative, she was an old virtue, an incombustible prude, with one of the most acute noses and most obtuse intellects imaginable. It is a characteristic fact that, beyond her family, no one had ever known her family name; she was called Mlle. Gillenormand the elder. In the matter of cant, Mlle. Gillenormand could have given points to a Miss. It was modesty pushed to the verge of the impure. She had one frightful reminiscence in her life, — one day a man saw her garter.

Age had only heightened this pitiless modesty, — her chemisette was never sufficiently opaque, and never was high enough. She multiplied brooches and pins at places where no one dreamed of looking. The peculiarity of prudery is to station the more sentries the less the fortress is menaced. Still, let who will explain these old mysteries of innocence, she allowed herself to be kissed without displeasure by an officer in the Lancers, who was her grand-nephew, and Théodule by name. In spite of this favored Lancer, however, the ticket of "Prude," which we have set upon her, suited her exactly. Mlle. Gillenormand's was a species of twilight soul, and prudery is a semi-virtue and a semi-vice. She added to prudery the congenial lining of bigotry; she belonged to the Sisterhood of the Virgin, wore a white veil on certain saints' days, muttered special orisons, revered "the holy blood," venerated "the sacred heart," remained for hours in contemplation before a rococo-Jesuit altar in a closed chapel, and allowed her soul to soar among the little marble clouds and through the large beams of gilt wood.

Digitized by Microsoft®

She had a chapel friend, an old maid like herself, of the name of Mlle. Vaubois, absolutely imbecile, and by whose side Mlle. Gillenormand had the pleasure of being an eagle. Beyond Agnus Deis and Ave Marias, Mlle. Vaubois knew nothing except the different ways of making preserves. Perfect of her kind, she was the ermine of stupidity, without a single spot of intelligence. We must add that Mlle. Gillenormand rather gained than lost by growing old. She had never been wicked, which is a relative goodness; and then years abrade angles, and time had softened her. She had an obscure melancholy, of which she did not herself possess the secret, and about her entire person there was the stupor of a finished life which has not begun. She kept house for her father; such families, consisting of an old man and an old maid, are not rare, and have the ever-touching appearance of two weaknesses supporting each other.

There was also in this house a child, — a little boy, — who was always trembling and dumb in the old gentleman's presence. M. Gillenormand never spoke to this boy except with a stern voice, and at times with upraised cane. "Come here, sir, — scamp, scoundrel, come here, — answer me, fellow, — let me see you, vagabond!" etc., etc. He adored him; it was his grandson, and we shall meet him again.

Digitized by Microsoft®

BOOK III.

GRANDFATHER AND GRANDSON.

CHAPTER I.

AN OLD DRAWING-ROOM.

When M. Gillenormand lived in the Rue Servandoni, he frequented several very good and highly noble salons. Although a bourgeois, M. Gillenormand was welcome in them, and as he had a two-fold stock of wit, namely, that which he had, and that attributed to him, he was sought after and made much of. There are some people who desire influence and to be talked about, no matter what price they pay; and when they cannot be oracles, they make themselves buffoons. M. Gillenormand was not of that nature; and his domination in the Royalist drawing-rooms which he frequented did not cost him any of his self-respect. He was an oracle everywhere; and at times he held his own against M. de Bonald, and even M. Bengy-Puy-Vallée.

About 1817, he invariably spent two afternoons a week at the house of the Baronne de T——, a worthy and respectable person whose husband had been, under Louis XVI., Ambassador to Berlin.

Digitized by Microsoft®

The Baron de T——, who, when alive, was passionately devoted to magnetic ecstasies and visions, died abroad a ruined man, leaving as his sole fortune ten MS. volumes bound in red Morocco and gilt-edged, which contained very curious memoirs about Mesmer and his trough. Madame de T—— did not publish these memoirs through dignity, and lived on a small annuity, which survived no one knew how. Madame de T—— lived away from Court, "which was a very mixed society," as she said, in noble, proud, and poor isolation. Some friends collected twice a week round her widow's fire, and this constituted a pure Royalist salon. Tea was drunk, and people uttered there, according as the wind blew to elegiacs or dithyrambics, groans or cries of horror about the age, the charter, the Buonapartists, the prostitution of the Cordon Bleu to untitled persons, and the Jacobinism of Louis XVIII.; and they also whispered about the hopes which Monsieur, afterwards Charles X., produced.

Low songs, in which Napoleon was called Nicholas, were greeted here with transports of delight. Duchesses, the most charming and delicate of ladies, went into ecstasies there about couplets like the following, which were addressed to the "Federals":

> "Renfoncez dans vos culottes
> Le bout d'chemise qui vous pend.
> Qu'on n'dis pas qu'les patriotes
> Ont arboré l'drapeau blanc!"

They amused themselves with puns which they fancied tremendous, with innocent jokes which they

Digitized by Microsoft®

supposed venomous, with quatrains and even distichs; here is one on the Dessolles Ministry, the moderate cabinet of which Mons. Decazes and Deserre formed part: —

> "Pour raffermir le trône ébranlé sur sa base,
> Il faut changer de sol, et de serre et de case;"

or else they played upon the list of the House of Peers, "an abominably Jacobin chamber," and combined names on this list so as to form, for instance, phrases like the following: "Damas, Sabran, Gouvion de St. Cyr." In this society the Revolution was parodied, and they had some desire to sharpen the same passions in the contrary sense, and sang their *ça ira.*

> "Ah! ça ira! ça ira! ça ira!
> Les buonapartist' à la lanterne!"

Songs are like the guillotine, — they cut off indiscriminately to-day this head, and to-morrow that. It is only a variation. In the Fualdès affair, which belongs to this period (1816), they sided with Bastide and Jansion, because Fualdès was "buonapartiste." They called the Liberals friends and brothers, and that was the last degree of insult. Like some church-steeples, the salon of the Baronne de T—— had two cocks: one was M. Gillenormand, the other the Comte de Lamothe Valois, of whom they whispered with a species of respect, — "You know? the Lamothe of the necklace business," — parties have these singular amnesties.

Let us add this; in the bourgeoisie, honored situations are lessened by too facile relations, and care

Digitized by Microsoft®

must be taken as to who is admitted. In the same way as there is a loss of caloric in the vicinity of cold persons, there is a diminution of respect on the approach of despised persons. The old high society held itself above this law, as above all others; Marigny, brother of the Pompadour, visited the Prince de Soubise, not although, but because, he was her brother. Du Barry, godfather of the Vaubernier, is most welcome at the house of the Maréchal de Richelieu. That world is Olympus, and Mercury and the Prince de Guemenée are at home in it. A robber is admitted to it, provided he be a god.

The Comte de Lamothe, who, in 1815, was seventy-five years of age, had nothing remarkable about him beyond his silent and sententious air, his angular and cold face, his perfectly polite manners, his coat buttoned up to the chin, and his constantly crossed legs, covered with trousers of the color of burnt Sienna. His face was the same color as his trousers. This M. de Lamothe was esteemed in this salon on account of his "celebrity," and, strange to say, but true, on account of his name of Valois.

As for M. Gillenormand, the respect felt for him was of perfectly good alloy. He was an authority; in spite of his levity, he had a certain imposing, worthy, honest, and haughty manner, which did not at all injure his gayety, and his great age added to it. A man is not a century with impunity, and years eventually form a venerable fence around a head. He made remarks, too, which had all the sparkle of the old régime. Thus, when the King of Prussia, after restoring Louis XVIII., paid him a

Digitized by Microsoft ®

visit under the name of the Comte de Ruppin, he was received by the descendant of Louis XIV. somewhat as if he were Marquis de Brandebourg, and with the most delicate impertinence. M. Gillenormand approved of it. "All kings who are not King of France," he said, "are provincial kings." One day the following question was asked, and answer given in his presence, — "What has been done about the editor of the *Courrier Français?*" "He is to be changed." "There's a *c* too much," M. Gillenormand dryly observed. At an anniversary Te Deum for the return of the Bourbons, on seeing M. de Talleyrand pass, he said, — "There's his Excellency the Devil."

M. Gillenormand was generally accompanied by his daughter, a tall young lady, who at that time was forty and looked fifty; and by a pretty boy of nine years of age, red and white, fresh, with happy, confident eyes, who never appeared in this drawing-room without hearing all the voices buzz around him, — "How pretty he is! What a pity, poor boy!" This lad was the one to whom we referred just now, and he was called "poor boy" because he had for father "a brigand of the Loire." This brigand was that son-in-law of M. Gillenormand, who has already been mentioned, and whom the old gentleman called the "disgrace of his family."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER II.

A RED SPECTRE OF THAT DAY.

Any one who had passed at that period through the little town of Vernon, and walked on the handsome stone bridge, which, let us hope, will soon be succeeded by some hideous wire bridge, would have noticed, on looking over the parapet, a man of about fifty, wearing a leathern cap, and trousers and jacket of coarse gray cloth, to which something yellow, which had been a red ribbon, was sewn, with a face tanned by the sun, and almost black, and hair almost white, with a large scar on his forehead and running down his cheek, bowed and prematurely aged, walking almost every day, spade and pick in hand, in one of the walled enclosures near the bridge, which border, like a belt of terraces, the left bank of the Seine. There are delicious enclosures full of flowers, of which you might say, were they much larger, "They are gardens," and if they were a little smaller, "They are bouquets." All these enclosures join the river at one end and a house at the other. The man in the jacket and wooden shoes, to whom we have alluded, occupied in 1817 the narrowest of these enclosures and the smallest of these houses. He lived there alone and solitary, silently and poorly, with a woman who was neither young nor old,

Digitized by Microsoft®

neither pretty nor ugly, neither peasant nor bourgeoise, who waited on him. The square of land which he called his garden was celebrated in the town for the beauty of the flowers he cultivated, and they were his occupation.

Through his toil, perseverance, attention, and watering-pot, he had succeeded in creating after the Creator; and he had invented sundry tulips and dahlias which seemed to have been forgotten by nature. He was ingenious, and preceded Soulange Bodin in the formation of small patches of peat-soil for the growth of the rare and precious shrubs of America and China. From daybreak in summer he was in his walks, pricking out, clipping, hoeing, watering, or moving among his flowers, with an air of kindness, sorrow, and gentleness. At times he would stand thoughtful and motionless for hours, listening to the song of a bird in a tree, the prattle of a child in a house, or else gazing at a drop of dew on a blade of grass, which the sun converted into a carbuncle. He lived very poorly, and drank more milk than wine: a child made him give way, and his servant scolded him. He was timid to such an extent that he seemed stern, went out rarely, and saw no one but the poor, who tapped at his window, and his curé, Abbé Mabœuf, a good old man. Still, if the inhabitants of the town or strangers, curious to see his roses or tulips, came and tapped at his little door, he opened it with a smile. He was the brigand of the Loire.

Any one who, at the same time, read military memoirs and biographies, the *Moniteur* and the bul-

Digitized by Microsoft®

letins of the great army, might have been struck by a name which pretty often turns up, that of George Pontmercy. When quite a lad this Pontmercy was a private in the Saintonge regiment, and when the Revolution broke out, this regiment formed part of the army of the Rhine, for the regiments of the Monarchy kept their provincial names even after the fall of the Monarchy, and were not brigaded till 1794. Pontmercy fought at Spires, Worms, Neustadt, Turkheim, Alzey, and at Mayence, where he was one of the two hundred who formed Houchard's rear-guard. He, with eleven others, held out against the corps of the Prince of Hesse behind the old rampart of Andernach, and did not fall back on the main body until the enemy's guns had opened a breach from the parapet to the talus. He was under Kléber at Marchiennes, and at the fight of Mont Palissel, where his arm was broken by a rifle-ball; then he went to the frontier of Italy, and was one of the thirty who defended the Col de Tenda with Joubert. Joubert was appointed adjutant-general, and Pontmercy sub-lieutenant; he was by Berthier's side amid the grape-shot on that day of Lodi which made Bonaparte say, "Berthier was gunner, trooper, and grenadier." He saw his old general Joubert fall at Novi at the moment when he was shouting, with uplifted sabre, "Forward!" Having embarked with his company on board a cutter which sailed from Genoa to some little port of the coast, he fell into a wasps' nest of seven or eight English sail. The Genoese commandant wished to throw his guns into the sea, hide the soldiers in the hold, and pass like a

Digitized by Microsoft®

merchant vessel; but Pontmercy had the tricolor flag hoisted at the peak, and proudly passed under the guns of the British frigates. Twenty leagues farther on, his audacity increasing, he attacked and captured a large English transport conveying troops to Sicily, and so laden with men and horses that the vessel's deck was almost flush with the sea. In 1805 he belonged to Malher's division, which took Gunzbourg from the Archduke Ferdinand, and at Wettingen he caught in his arms, amid a shower of bullets, Colonel Maupilet, who was mortally wounded at the head of the 9th Dragoons. He distinguished himself at Austerlitz in that admirable march in columns of companies performed under the enemy's fire; and when the Russian Imperial Horse Guards destroyed one of the battalions of the 4th line Infantry, Pontmercy was among those who took their revenge, and drove back these Guards. For this the Emperor gave him the Cross. Pontmercy saw in turn Wurmser made prisoner at Mantua, Mélas at Alessandria, and Mack at Ulm, and he belonged to the 8th corps of the grand army which Mortier commanded, and which took Hamburg. Then he joined the 55th regiment of the line, which was the old regiment of Flanders; at Eylau, he was in the cemetery where the heroic Captain Louis Hugo, uncle of the author of this book, withstood, with his company of eighty-three men, for two hours, the whole effort of the enemy's army. Pontmercy was one of the three who left this cemetery alive. He was at Friedland; then he saw Moscow, the Beresina, Lutzen, Bautzen, Dresden, Wacha, Leipsic, and the defiles of Geln-

Digitized by Microsoft®

hausen; then at Montmereil, Château-Thierry, Craon, the banks of the Marne, the banks of the Aisne, and the formidable position of Laon. At Arnay le Duc, as captain, he sabred ten Cossacks, and saved not his general, but his corporal; he was cut to pieces on this occasion, and seven-and-twenty splinters were taken out of his left arm alone. Eight days before the capitulation of Paris he exchanged with a comrade and entered the cavalry; for he had what was called under the old régime a "double hand;" that is to say, an equal aptitude in handling, as private, a sabre or musket, as officer, a squadron or a company. From this aptitude, improved by military education, special arms sprang, for instance, the dragoons, who are at once cavalry and infantry. He accompanied Napoleon to Elba, and at Waterloo was a Major of cuirassiers in Dubois' brigade. It was he who took the colors of the Limburg battalion, and himself threw them at the Emperor's feet. He was covered with blood; for, on seizing the colors, he received a sabre-cut across the face. The Emperor, who was pleased, cried out to him, "You are a Colonel, a Baron, and officer of the Legion of Honor!" Pontmercy answered, — "Sire, I thank you on behalf of my widow." An hour later he fell into the ravine of Ohain. And now who was this George Pontmercy? He was the same brigand of the Loire.

We have already seen some portion of his history. After Waterloo, Pontmercy, drawn as we remember out of the sunken road of Ohain, succeeded in rejoining the army, and dragged himself from ambulance to ambulance as far as the cantonments of the Loire.

Digitized by Microsoft ®

The Restoration put him on half-pay, and then sent him to Vernon, under honorable surveillance. King Louis XVIII., regarding all that was done in the Hundred Days as if it had not happened, recognized neither his quality as officer of the Legion of Honor, nor his commission as Colonel, nor his title as Baron. He for his part neglected no opportunity to sign himself, "Colonel Baron de Pontmercy." He had only one old blue coat, and never went out without attaching to it the rosette of the Legion of Honor. The King's attorney advised him that he would be tried for illegally wearing this decoration; and when this hint was given him by an officious intermediator, Pontmercy replied, with a bitter smile, "I do not know whether it is I that no longer understand French, or whether you are not speaking it, but the fact remains the same: I do not understand you." Then he went out for eight days in succession with his rosette, and the authorities did not venture to interfere with him. Twice or thrice the Minister of War or the General commanding the department wrote to him with the following superscription: "M. le Commandant Pontmercy," and he sent back the letters unopened. At the same moment Napoleon at St. Helena was treating in the same fashion the missives of Sir Hudson Lowe, addressed to "General Bonaparte." If we may be forgiven the remark, Pontmercy finished by having the same saliva in his mouth as the Emperor. There were also at Rome, Carthaginian prisoners who refused to salute Flaminius, and had a little of Hannibal's soul in them.

Digitized by Microsoft®

One morning he met the King's attorney in a street of Vernon, went up to him, and said, "Monsieur le Procureur du Roi, am I allowed to wear my scar?"

He had nothing but his scanty half-pay as Major, and he had taken the smallest house in Vernon, where he lived alone, in what way we have just seen. Under the Empire and between two wars he found time to marry Mlle. Gillenormand. The old bourgeois, who was indignant in his heart, concluded with a sigh and saying, "The greatest families are forced into it." In 1815, Madame Pontmercy, a most admirable woman in every respect, and worthy of her husband, died, leaving a child. This child would have been the Colonel's delight in his solitude; but the grandfather imperiously claimed him, declaring that if he were not given up to him he would disinherit him. The father yielded for the sake of the little one, and, unable to love his son, he took to loving flowers.

He had, however, given up everything, and did not join the opposition or conspire. He shared his thoughts between the innocent things he did and the great things he had done, and he spent his time in hoping for a carnation or calling to mind Austerlitz. M. Gillenormand kept up no relations with his son-in-law; the Colonel was to him a "bandit," and he was for the Colonel an "ass." M. Gillenormand never spoke about the Colonel, except at times to make mocking allusions to "his barony." It was expressly stipulated that Pontmercy should never attempt to see his son or speak to him, under

Digitized by Microsoft®

penalty of having him thrown on his hands disinherited. To the Gillenormands, Pontmercy was a plague patient, and they intended to bring up the child after their fashion. The Colonel perhaps did wrong in accepting these terms, but he endured them, in the belief that he was acting rightly, and only sacrificing himself.

The inheritance of the grandfather was a small matter, but that of Mlle. Gillenormand the elder was considerable, for this aunt was very rich on her mother's side, and her sister's son was her natural heir. The boy, who was called Marius, knew that he had a father, but nothing more, and no one opened his lips to him on the subject. Still, in the society to which his grandfather took him, the whisperings and winks eventually produced light in the boy's mind; he understood something at last, and, as he naturally accepted, by a species of infiltration and slow penetration, the ideas and opinions which were, so to speak, his breathing medium, he gradually came to think of his father only with shame.

While he was thus growing up in this way, the Colonel every two or three months came furtively to Paris, like a convict who is breaking his ban, and posted himself at St. Sulpice, at the hour when Aunt Gillenormand took Marius to Mass. Trembling lest the aunt should turn round, concealed behind a pillar, motionless, and scarce daring to breathe, he looked at this boy; the scarred warrior was frightened at this old maid.

From this very circumstance emanated his friend-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ship with the Abbé Mabœuf, Curé of Vernon. This worthy priest had a brother, churchwarden of St. Sulpice, who had several times noticed this man contemplating his child, and the scar on his cheek, and the heavy tear in his eye. This man, who looked so thoroughly a man, and who wept like a child, struck the churchwarden, and this face adhered to his memory. One day when he went to Vernon to see his brother he met on the bridge Colonel Pontmercy, and recognized his man of St. Sulpice. The churchwarden told the affair to the Curé, and both made some excuse to pay a visit to the Colonel. This visit led to others; and the Colonel, though at first very close, eventually opened his heart, and the Curé and the churchwarden learned the whole story, and how Pontmercy sacrificed his own happiness to the future of his child. The result was that the Curé felt a veneration and tenderness for him, and the Colonel, on his side, took the Curé into his affection. By the way, when both are equally sincere and good, no men amalgamate more easily than an old priest and an old soldier, for they are the same men at the bottom. One devotes himself to his country down here, the other to his country up there; that is the sole difference.

Twice a year, on January 1st, and Saint George's day, Marius wrote his father letters dictated by his aunt, and which looked as if copied from a handbook, for that was all M. Gillenormand tolerated; and the father sent very affectionate replies, which the grandfather thrust into his pocket without reading.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER III.

REQUIESCANT!

THE salon of Madame de T—— was all that Marius Pontmercy knew of the world, and it was the sole opening by which he could look out into life. This opening was gloomy, and more cold than heat, more night than day, reached him through this trap. This boy, who was all joy and light on entering the strange world, became thus, in a short time, sad, and what is more contrary still to his age, serious. Surrounded by all these imposing and singular persons, he looked about him with serious astonishment, and all contributed to augment his stupor. There were in Madame de T——'s drawing-room old, noble, and very venerable ladies, who called themselves Mathau, Noé, Levis (pronounced Levi), and Cambis, (pronounced Cambyse). These ancient faces and these Biblical names were mingled in the boy's mind with his Old Testament, which he learned by heart, and when they were all present, seated in a circle round an expiring fire, scarce illumined by a green-shaded lamp, with their severe faces, their gray or white hair, their long dresses of another age, in which only mournful colors could be seen, and uttering at lengthened intervals words at once majestic and

Digitized by Microsoft®

stern, little Marius regarded them with wandering eyes and fancied that he saw not women, but patriarchs, and Magi, — not real beings, but ghosts.

With these ghosts were mingled several priests, habitués of this old salon, and a few gentlemen: the Marquis de Sass——, secretary to Madame de Berry; the Vicomte de Val——, who published odes under the pseudonym of Charles Antoine; the Prince de Beauff——, who, though still young, had a gray head and a pretty, clever wife, whose dress of scarlet velvet, with gold embroidery, cut very low in the neck, startled this gloom; the Marquis de C——, d'E——, the Frenchman, who was most acquainted with "graduated politeness;" the Comte d'Am——, a gentleman with a benevolent chin; and the Chevalier de Port de Guy, the pillar of the library of the Louvre, called the King's Cabinet. M. de Port de Guy, bald and rather aging than old, used to tell how in 1793, when he was sixteen years of age, he was placed in the hulks as refractory, and chained to an octogenarian, the Bishop of Mirepoix, also a refractory, but as priest, while he was so as soldier. It was at Toulon, and their duty was to go at night to collect on the scaffold the heads and bodies of persons guillotined during the day. They carried these dripping trunks on their backs, and their red jackets had behind the nape of the neck a crust of blood, which was dry in the morning and moist at night. These tragical narratives abounded in the salon of Madame de T——, and through cursing Marat they came to applaud Trestaillon. A few deputies of the "introuvable" sort played their rubber of

Digitized by Microsoft ®

whist there; for instance, M. Thíbord du Chalard, M. Lemarchant de Gomicourt, and the celebrated jester of the right division, M. Cornet Dincourt. The Bailiff of Ferrette, with his knee-breeches and thin legs, at times passed through this room, when proceeding to M. de Talleyrand's; he had been a companion of the Comte d'Artois, and acting in the opposite way to Aristotle reclining on Campaspe, he had made the Guimard crawl on all fours, and thus displayed to ages a philosopher avenged by a bailiff.

As for the priests, there was the Abbé Halma, the same to whom M. Larose, his fellow-contributor on *la Foudre*, said, "Stuff, who is not fifty years of age? a few hobble-de-hoys, perhaps." Then came the Abbé Letourneur, preacher to the King; the Abbé Frayssinous, who at that time was neither Bishop, Count, Minister, nor Peer, and who wore a soutane, from which buttons were absent; and the Abbé Keravenant, Curé of St. Germain des Prés. To them must be added the Papal Nuncio, at that date Monsignore Macchi, Archbishop of Nisibi, afterwards Cardinal, and remarkable for his long pensive nose; and another Monsignore, whose titles ran as follow: Abbate Palmieri, domestic Prelate, one of the seven Prothonotaries sharing in the Holy See, Canon of the glorious Liberian Basilica, and advocate of the Saints, *postulatore Dei Santi*, an office relating to matters of canonization, and meaning very nearly, Referendary to the department of Paradise. Finally, two Cardinals, M. de la Luzerne, and M. de Cl—— T——. The Cardinal de Luzerne was an author, and was destined to have the honor

Digitized by Microsoft®

a few years later of signing articles in the *Conservateur* side by side with Chateaubriand; M. de Cl—— T——, was Archbishop of Toulouse, and frequently spent the summer in Paris with his nephew the Marquis de T——, who had been Minister of the Navy and of War. The Cardinal de Cl—— T—— was a merry little old gentleman, who displayed his red stockings under his tucked-up cassock. His specialty was hating the Encyclopædia and playing madly at billiards; and persons who on summer evenings passed along the Rue M——, where M. de Cl—— T—— then resided, stopped to listen to the sound of the balls and the sharp voice of the Cardinal crying to his Conclavist Monseigneur Cottret, Bishop *in partibus* of Caryste, "Mark me a carom, Abbé." The Cardinal de Cl—— T—— had been introduced to Madame de T—— by his most intimate friend, M. de Roquelaure, ex-Bishop of Senlis and one of the Forty. M. de Roquelaure was remarkable for his great height and his assiduity at the Academy. Through the glass door of the room adjoining the library, in which the French Academy at that time met, curious persons could contemplate every Thursday the ex-Bishop of Senlis, usually standing with hair freshly powdered, in violet stockings, and turning his back to the door, apparently to display his little collar the better. All these ecclesiastics, although mostly courtiers as much as churchmen, added to the gravity of the salon, to which five Peers of France, the Marquis de Vib——, the Marquis de Tal——, the Marquis d'Herb——, the Vicomte Damb——, and the Duc

Digitized by Microsoft®

de Val——, imparted the lordly tone. This Duc de Val——, though Prince de Mon——, that is to say, a foreign sovereign prince, had so lofty an idea of France and the Peerage, that he looked at everything through them. It was he who said, "The Cardinals are the French Peers of Rome, and the Lords are the French Peers of England." Still, as in the present age the Revolution must be everywhere, this feudal salon was ruled, as we have seen, by M. Gillenormand, a bourgeois.

It was the essence and quintessence of white Parisian society, and reputations, even Royalist ones, were kept in quarantine there, for there is always anarchy in reputation. Had Chateaubriand come in he would have produced the effect of Père Duchêne. Some converts, however, entered this orthodox society through a spirit of toleration. Thus the Comte Beug—— was admitted for the purpose of correction. The "noble" salons of the present day in no way resemble the one which I am describing, for the Royalists of to-day, let us say it in their praise, are demagogues. At Madame de T——'s the society was superior, and the taste exquisite and haughty beneath a grand bloom of politeness. The habits there displayed all sorts of involuntary refinement, which was the ancient régime itself, which lived though interred. Some of these habits, especially in conversation, seemed whimsical, and superficial persons would have taken for provincialism what was merely antiquated. They called a lady "Madame la Générale," and "Madame la Colonelle" had not entirely been laid aside. The charming Madame

Digitized by Microsoft®

de Léon, doubtless remembering the Duchesses de Longueville and de Chevreuse, preferred that appellation to her title of Princess, and the Marquise de Créquy was also called "Madame la Colonelle."

It was this small high society which invented at the Tuileries the refinement of always speaking of the King in the third person, and never saying, "Your Majesty," as that qualification had been "sullied by the usurper." Facts and men were judged there, and the age was ridiculed — which saved the trouble of comprehending it. They assisted one another in amazement, and communicated mutually the amount of enlightenment they possessed. Methusalem instructed Epimenides, — the deaf put the blind straight. The time which had elapsed since Coblenz was declared not to have passed, and in the same way as Louis XVIII. was *Dei gratia* in the twenty-fifth year of his reign, the *émigrés* were *de jure* in the twenty-fifth year of their adolescence.

Everything harmonized there: no one was too lively, the speech was like a breath, and the newspapers, in accordance with the salon, seemed a papyrus. The liveries in the ante-room were old, and these personages who had completely passed away were served by footmen of the same character. All this had the air of having lived a long time and obstinately struggling against the tomb. To Conserve, Conservation, Conservative, represented nearly their entire dictionary, and "to be in good odor" was the point. There were really aromatics in the opinions of these venerable groups, and their ideas smelt of vervain. It was a mummy world, in which

Digitized by Microsoft®

the masters were embalmed and the servants stuffed. A worthy old Marchioness, ruined by the emigration, who had only one woman-servant left, continued to say, "My people."

What did they do in Madame de T——'s salon? They were ultra. This remark, though what it represents has possibly not disappeared, has no meaning at the present day, so let us explain it. To be ultra is going beyond; it is attacking the sceptre in the name of the throne and the mitre in the name of the altar; it is mismanaging the affair you have in hand; it is kicking over the traces; it is disputing with the executioner about the degree of roasting which heretics should undergo; it is reproaching the idol for its want of idolatry; it is insulting through excess of respect; it is finding in the Pope insufficient Papism, in the King too little royalty, and too much light in the night; it is being dissatisfied with alabaster, snow, the swan, and the lily, on behalf of whiteness; it is being a partisan of things to such a pitch that you become their enemy; it is being so strong for, that you become against.

The ultra spirit specially characterizes the first phase of the Restoration. Nothing in history ever resembled that quarter of an hour which begins in 1814 and terminates in 1820, with the accession of M. de Villèle, the practical man of the Right. These six years were an extraordinary moment, at once noisy and silent, silent and gloomy, enlightened, as it were, by a beam of dawn, and covered, at the same time, by the darkness of the great catastrophe which still filled the horizon, and was slowly sinking

Digitized by Microsoft®

into the past. There was in this light and this shadow an old society and a new society, buffoon and melancholy, juvenile and senile, and rubbing its eyes, for nothing is so like a re-awaking as a return. There were groups that regarded France angrily and which France regarded ironically; the streets full of honest old Marquis-owls, returned and returning, "ci-devants," stupefied by everything; brave and noble gentlemen smiling at being in France and also weeping at it, ravished at seeing their country again, and in despair at not finding their monarchy; the nobility of the Crusades spitting on the nobility of the Empire, that is to say, of the sword; historic races that had lost all feeling of history; the sons of the companions of Charlemagne disdaining the companions of Napoleon. The swords, as we have said, hurled insults at one another; the sword of Fontenoy was ridiculous, and only a bar of rusty iron; the sword of Marengo was odious, and only a sabre. The olden times misunderstood yesterday, and no one had a feeling of what is great or what is ridiculous. Some one was found to call Bonaparte Scapin. This world no longer exists, and nothing connected with it, let us repeat, remains at the present day. When we draw out of it some figure hap-hazard, and try to bring it to bear again mentally, it seems to us as strange as the antediluvian world; and, in fact, it was also swallowed up by a deluge and disappeared under two revolutions. What waves ideas are! How quickly do they cover whatever they have a mission to destroy and bury, and how promptly do they produce unknown depths!

Digitized by Microsoft®

Such was the physiognomy of the salon in those distant and candid days when M. Martainville had more wit than Voltaire. These salons had a literature and politics of their own: people in them believed in Fiévée, and M. Agier laid down the law there. M. Colnet, the publisher and bookseller of the Quai Malaquais, was commented on, and Napoleon was fully the ogre of Corsica there. At a later date the introduction into history of M. le Marquis de Buonaparté, Lieutenant-General of the armies of the King, was a concession to the spirit of the age. These salons did not long remain pure, and in 1818 a few doctrinaires, a very alarming tinge, began to culminate in them. In matters of which the ultras were very proud, the doctrinaires were somewhat ashamed; they had wit, they had silence, their political dogma was properly starched with hauteur, and they must succeed. They carried white neckcloths and buttoned coats to an excessive length, though it was useful. The fault or misfortune of the doctrinaire party was in creating old youth: they assumed the posture of sages, and dreamed of grafting a temperate power upon the absolute and excessive principle. They opposed, and at times with rare sense, demolishing liberalism by conservative liberalism; and they might be heard saying: "Have mercy on Royalism, for it has rendered more than one service. It brought back traditions, worship, religion, and respect. It is faithful, true, chivalrous, loving, and devoted, and has blended, though reluctantly, the secular grandeurs of the Monarchy with the new grandeurs of the nation. It

Digitized by Microsoft®

is wrong in not understanding the Revolution, the Empire, glory, liberty, young ideas, young generations, and the age; but do we not sometimes act quite as wrongly against it? The Revolution of which we are the heirs ought to be on good terms with everything. Attacking the Royalists is the contrary of liberalism; what a fault and what blindness! Revolutionary France fails in its respect to historic France; that is to say, to its mother, to itself. After September 5th, the nobility of the Monarchy were treated like the nobility of the Empire after July 8th; they were unjust to the eagle and we are unjust to the *fleur-de-lys*. There must be, then, always something to proscribe! Is it very useful to ungild the crown of Louis XIV., and scratch off the escutcheon of Henri IV.? We sneer at M. de Vaublanc, who effaced the N's from the bridge of Jena; but he only did what we are doing. Bouvines belongs to us as much as Marengo, and the *fleurs-de-lys* are ours, like the N's. They constitute our patrimony; then why should we diminish it? The country must be no more denied in the past than in the present; why should we not have a grudge with the whole of history? Why should we not love the whole of France?" It was thus that the doctrinaires criticised and protected the Royalists, who were dissatisfied at being criticised, and furious at being protected.

The ultras marked the first epoch of the Revolution, and the Congregation characterized the second; skill succeeded impetuosity. Let us close our sketch at this point.

Digitized by Microsoft®

In the course of his narrative, the author of this book found on his road this curious moment of contemporary history, and thought himself bound to take a passing glance at it, and retrace some of the singular features of this society, which is unknown at the present day. But he has done so rapidly, and without any bitter or derisive idea, for affectionate and respectful reminiscences, connected with his mother, attach him to this past. Moreover, let him add, this little world had a grandeur of its own, and though we may smile at it, we cannot despise or hate it. It was the France of other days.

Marius Pontmercy, like most children, received some sort of education. When he left the hands of Aunt Gillenormand, his grandfather intrusted him to a worthy professor of the finest classical innocence. This young mind, just expanding, passed from a prude to a pedant. Marius spent some years at college, and then entered the law-school; he was royalist, fanatic, and austere. He loved but little his grandfather, whose gayety and cynicism ruffled him, and he was gloomy as regarded his father. In other respects, he was an ardent yet cold, noble, generous, proud, religious, and exalted youth; worthy almost to harshness, and fierce almost to savageness.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER IV.

THE END OF THE BRIGAND.

THE conclusion of Marius's classical studies coincided with M. Gillenormand's retirement from society; the old gentleman bade farewell to the Faubourg St. Germain and Madame de T——'s drawing-room, and proceeded to establish himself in the Marais at his house in the Rue des Filles du Calvaire. His servants were, in addition to the porter, that Nicolette who succeeded Magnon, and that wheezing, short-winded Basque, to whom we have already alluded. In 1827 Marius attained his seventeenth year; on coming home one evening he saw his grandfather holding a letter in his hand.

"Marius," said M. Gillenormand, "you will start to-morrow for Vernon."

"What for?" Marius asked.

"To see your father."

Marius trembled, for he had thought of everything excepting this, — that he might one day be obliged to see his father. Nothing could be more unexpected, more surprising, and, let us add, more disagreeable for him. It was estrangement forced into approximation, and it was not an annoyance so much as a drudgery. Marius, in addition to his motives of

Digitized by Microsoft ®

political antipathy, was convinced that his father, the trooper, as M. Gillenormand called him in his good-tempered days, did not love him; that was evident, as he had abandoned him thus and left him to others. Not feeling himself beloved, he did not love; and he said to himself that nothing could be more simple. He was so stupefied that he did not question his grandfather, but M. Gillenormand continued, —

"It seems that he is ill, and asks for you."

And after a silence he added, —

"Start to-morrow morning. I believe there is a coach which leaves at six o'clock and gets to Vernon at nightfall. Go by it, for he says that the matter presses."

Then he crumpled up the letter and put it in his pocket. Marius could have started the same night, and have been with his father the next morning; a diligence at that time used to run at night to Rouen, passing through Vernon. But neither M. Gillenormand nor Marius dreamed of inquiring. On the evening of the following day Marius arrived at Vernon, and asked the first passer-by for the house of "Monsieur Pontmercy;" for in his mind he was of the same opinion as the Restoration, and did not recognize either his father's Barony or Colonelcy. The house was shown him; he rang, and a woman holding a small hand-lamp opened the door for him.

"Monsieur Pontmercy?" Marius asked.

The woman stood motionless.

"Is this his house?" Marius continued.

Digitized by Microsoft®

The woman shook her head in the affirmative.

"Can I speak to him?"

The woman made a negative sign.

"Why, I am his son," Marius added; "and he expects me."

"He no longer expects you," the woman said.

Then he noticed that she was crying; she pointed to the door of a parlor, and he went in. In this room, which was lighted by a tallow candle placed on the mantel-piece, there were three men, one standing, one on his knees, and one lying full length upon the floor in his shirt. The one on the floor was the Colonel; the other two were a physician and a priest praying. The Colonel had been attacked by a brain fever three days before, and having a foreboding of evil, he wrote to M. Gillenormand, asking for his son. The illness grew worse, and on the evening of Marius' arrival at Vernon the Colonel had an attack of delirium. He leaped out of bed, in spite of the maid-servant, crying, "My son does not arrive, I will go to meet him." Then he left his bed-room, and fell on the floor of the ante-room; he had just expired. The physician and the curé were sent for, but both arrived too late; the son had also arrived too late. By the twilight gleam of the candle, a heavy tear, which had fallen from the Colonel's dead eye, could be noticed on his pallid cheek. The eye was lustreless, but the tear had not dried up. This tear was his son's delay.

Marius gazed upon this man whom he saw for the first time and the last, upon this venerable and manly face, these open eyes which no longer saw, this white

Digitized by Microsoft®

hair, and the robust limbs upon which could be distinguished here and there brown lines which were sabre-cuts, and red stars which were bullet-holes. He gazed at the gigantic scar which imprinted heroism on this face, upon which God had imprinted gentleness. He thought that this man was his father, and that this man was dead, and he remained cold. The sorrow he felt was such as he would have felt in the presence of any other man whom he might have seen lying dead before him.

Mourning and lamentation were in this room. The maid-servant was weeping in a corner, the priest was praying, and could be heard sobbing, the physician wiped his eyes, and the corpse itself wept. The physician, priest, and woman looked at Marius through their affliction without saying a word, for he was the stranger. Marius, who was so little affected, felt ashamed and embarrassed at his attitude, and he let the hat which he held in his hand fall on the ground, in order to induce a belief that sorrow deprived him of the strength to hold it. At the same time he felt a species of remorse, and despised himself for acting thus. But was it his fault? he had no cause to love his father.

The Colonel left nothing, and the sale of the furniture scarce covered the funeral expenses. The maid-servant found a scrap of paper, which she handed to Marius. On it were the following lines, written by the Colonel: —

"*For my son.* The Emperor made me a Baron on the field of Waterloo, and as the Restoration contests this title, which I purchased with my blood, my

Digitized by Microsoft®

son will assume it and wear it. Of course he will be worthy of it." On the back the Colonel had added, "At this same battle of Waterloo a sergeant saved my life; his name is Thénardier, and I believe that he has recently kept a small inn in a village near Paris, either Chelles or Montfermeil. If my son meet this Thénardier he will do all he can for him."

Not through any affection for his father, but owing to that vague respect for death which is ever so imperious in the heart of man, Marius took this paper and put it away. Nothing was left of the Colonel. M. Gillenormand had his sword and uniform sold to the Jews; the neighbors plundered the garden and carried off the rare flowers, while the others became brambles and died. Marius remained only forty-eight hours in Vernon. After the funeral he returned to Paris and his legal studies, thinking no more of his father than if he had never existed. In two days the Colonel was buried, and in three forgotten.

Marius had a crape on his hat, and that was all.

Digitized by Microsoft ®

CHAPTER V.

MARIUS MEETS A CHURCHWARDEN.

MARIUS had retained the religious habits of his childhood. One Sunday, when he went to hear Mass at St. Sulpice, in the Chapel of the Virgin to which his aunt took him when a boy, being on that day more than usually absent and thoughtful, he placed himself behind a pillar, and knelt, without paying attention to the fact, upon a Utrecht velvet chair, on the back of which was written, "Monsieur Mabœuf, Churchwarden." The Mass had scarce begun when an old gentleman presented himself, and said to Marius,—

"This is my place, sir."

Marius at once stepped aside, and the old gentleman took his seat. When Mass was ended Marius stood pensively for a few moments, till the old gentleman came up to him and said, —

"I ask your pardon, sir, for having disturbed you just now, and for troubling you afresh at this moment; but you must have considered me ill-bred, and so I wish to explain the matter to you."

"It is unnecessary, sir," said Marius.

"No, it is not," the old man continued, "for I do not wish you to have a bad opinion of me. I am

Digitized by Microsoft®

attached to this seat, and it seems to me that the Mass is better here, and I will tell you my reason. To this spot I saw during ten years, at regular intervals of two or three months, a poor worthy father come, who had no other opportunity or way of seeing his son, because they were separated through family arrangements. He came at the hour when he knew that his son would be brought to Mass. The boy did not suspect that his father was here — perhaps did not know, the innocent, that he had a father. The latter kept behind a pillar so that he might not be seen, looked at his child and wept; for the poor man adored him, as I could see. This spot has become, so to speak, sanctified for me, and I have fallen into the habit of hearing Mass here. I prefer it to the bench to which I should have a right as churchwarden. I even knew the unfortunate gentleman slightly. He had a father-in-law, a rich aunt, and other relatives, who threatened to disinherit the boy if the father ever saw him, and he sacrificed himself that his son might one day be rich and happy. They were separated through political opinions, and though I certainly approve of such opinions, there are persons who do not know where to stop. Good gracious! because a man was at Waterloo he is not a monster; a father should not be separated from his child on that account. He was one of Bonaparte's colonels, and is dead, I believe. He lived at Vernon, where I have a brother who is curé, and his name was something like Pontmarie or Montpercy. He had, on my word, a great sabre-cut."

"Pontmercy," Marius said, turning pale.

Digitized by Microsoft®

"Precisely, Pontmercy; did you know him?"

"He was my father, sir."

The old churchwarden clasped his hands and exclaimed,—

"Ah! you are the boy! Yes, yes, he would be a man now. Well, poor boy! you may say that you had a father who loved you dearly."

Marius offered his arm to the old gentleman and conducted him to his house. The next day he said to M. Gillenormand,—

"Some friends of mine have arranged a shooting-party; will you allow me to go away for three days?"

"Four," the grandfather answered; "go and amuse yourself." And he whispered to his daughter with a wink, "Some love affair!"

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT RESULTED FROM MEETING A CHURCHWARDEN.

WHERE Marius went we shall learn presently. He was away three days, then returned to Paris, went straight to the library of the Law-school and asked for a file of the *Moniteur*. He read it; he read all the histories of the Republic and the Empire; the Memorial of St. Helena, all the memoirs, journals, bulletins, and proclamations, — he fairly devoured them. The first time he came across his father's name in a bulletin of the grand army he had a fever for a whole week. He called upon the generals under whom George Pontmercy had served; among others, Count H——. The churchwarden, whom he saw again, told him of the life at Vernon, the Colonel's retirement, his flowers, and his solitude. Marius had at last a perfect knowledge of this rare, sublime, and gentle man, this species of lion-lamb, who had been his father.

While occupied with this study, which filled all his moments as well as all his thoughts, he scarce ever saw the Gillenormands. He appeared at meals, but when sought for after them he could not be found. His aunt sulked, but old Gillenormand smiled. "Stuff, stuff, it is the right age!" At times the old

Digitized by Microsoft®

man would add, "Confound it! I thought that it was an affair of gallantry, but it seems that it is a passion." It was a passion in truth, for Marius was beginning to adore his father.

At the same time an extraordinary change took place in his ideas, and the phases of this change were numerous and successive. As this is the history of many minds in our day, we deem it useful to follow these phases step by step, and indicate them all. The history he had just read startled him, and the first effect was bedazzlement. The Republic, the Empire, had hitherto been to him but monstrous words, — the Republic a guillotine in the twilight; the Empire a sabre in the night. He had looked into it, and where he had only expected to find a chaos of darkness he had seen, with a species of extraordinary surprise, mingled with fear and delight, stars flashing, — Mirabeau, Vergniaud, St. Just, Robespierre, Camille Desmoulins, and Danton, — and a sun rise, Napoleon. He knew not where he was, and he recoiled, blinded by the brilliancy. Gradually, when the first surprise had worn off, he accustomed himself to this radiance. He regarded the deed without dizziness, and examined persons without terror; the Revolution and the Empire stood out in luminous perspective before his visionary eyeballs; he saw each of these two groups of events and facts contained in two enormous facts: the Revolution in the sovereignty of civic right restored to the masses, the Empire in the sovereignty of the French idea imposed on Europe; he saw the great figure of the people emerge from the Revolution, the great figure of

Digitized by Microsoft®

France from the Empire, and he declared to himself on his conscience that all this was good.

What his bedazzlement neglected in this first appreciation, which was far too synthetical, we do not think it necessary to indicate here. We are describing the state of a mind advancing, and all progress is not made in one march. This said, once for all, as to what precedes and what is to follow, we will continue.

He then perceived that up to this moment he had no more understood his country than he had his father. He had known neither the one nor the other, and he had spread a species of voluntary night over his eyes. He now saw; and on one side he admired, on the other he adored. He was full of regret and remorse, and he thought with despair that he could only tell to a tomb all that he had in his mind. Oh, if his father were alive, if he had him still, if God in His compassion and His goodness had allowed this father to be still alive, how he would have flown, how he would have cried to his father, — "Father, here I am, it is I! I have the same heart as you! I am your son!" How he would have kissed his white head, bathed his hair with his tears, gazed at his scar, pressed his hand, adored his clothes, and embraced his feet! Oh, why did this father die so soon, before justice had been done him, before he had known his son's love? Marius had a constant sob in his heart, which said at every moment, "Alas!" At the same time he became more truly serious, more truly grave, more sure of his faith and his thoughts. At each instant

Digitized by Microsoft®

beams of light arrived to complete his reason, and a species of internal growth went on within him. He felt a natural aggrandizement produced by the two things so new to him, — his father and his country.

As a door can be easily opened when we hold the key, he explained to himself what he had hated, and understood what he had abhorred. Henceforth he saw clearly the providential, divine, and human meaning, the great things which he had been taught to detest, and the great men whom he had been instructed to curse. When he thought of his previous opinions, which were but of yesterday, and which yet seemed to him so old, he felt indignant and smiled. From the rehabilitation of his father he had naturally passed to that of Napoleon; but the latter, we must say, was not effected without labor. From childhood he had been imbued with the judgments of the party of 1814 about Bonaparte; now, all the prejudices of the Restoration, all its interests, and all its instincts, tended to disfigure Napoleon, and it execrated him, even more than Robespierre. It had worked rather cleverly upon the weariness of the nation and the hatred of mothers. Bonaparte had become a species of almost fabulous monster, and in order to depict him to the imagination of the people, which, as we said just now, resembles that of children, the party of 1814 brought forward in turn all the frightful masques, from that which is terrible while remaining grand, down to that which is terrible while becoming grotesque, — from Tiberius down to old Bogy. Hence, in speaking of Bonaparte, people were at liberty to sob or burst with laughter,

Digitized by Microsoft®

provided that hatred sung the bass. Marius had never had on the subject of — that man, as he was called — any other ideas but these in his mind, and they were combined with his natural tenacity. He was a headstrong little man, who hated Napoleon.

On reading history, on studying before all documents and materials, the veil which hid Napoleon from Marius's sight was gradually rent asunder; he caught a glimpse of something immense, and suspected that up to this moment he had been mistaken about Bonaparte, as about all the rest; each day he saw more clearly, and he began climbing slowly, step by step, at the beginning almost reluctantly, but then with intoxication, and as if attracted by an irresistible fascination, first the gloomy steps, then the dimly-lighted steps, and at last the luminous and splendid steps of enthusiasm.

One night he was alone in his little garret, his candle was lighted, and he was reading at a table by the open window. All sorts of reveries reached him from the space, and were mingled with his thoughts. What a spectacle is night! We hear dull sounds and know not whence they come; we see Jupiter, which is twelve hundred times larger than the earth glowing like a fire-ball; the blue is black, the stars sparkle, and the whole forms a formidable sight. He was reading the bulletins of the grand army, those Homeric strophes written on the battle-field; he saw in them at intervals the image of his father, and ever that of the Emperor; the whole of the great Empire was before him; he felt, as it were, a tide within him swelling and mounting; it seemed

Digitized by Microsoft®

at moments as if his father passed close to him like a breath, and whispered in his ear; little by little he grew strange, he fancied he could hear drums, cannon, and bugles, the measured tread of the battalions, and the hollow distant gallop of the cavalry; from time to time his eyes were raised and surveyed the colossal constellations flashing in the profundities, and then they fell again upon the book, and he saw in that other colossal things stirring confusedly. His heart was contracted, he was transported, trembling, and gasping; and all alone, without knowing what was within him or what he obeyed, he rose, stretched his arms out of the window, looked fixedly at the shadow, the silence, the dark infinitude, the eternal immensity, and shouted, "Long live the Emperor!"

From this moment it was all over. The ogre of Corsica, the usurper, the tyrant, the monster who was the lover of his own sisters, the actor who took lessons of Talma, the poisoner of Jaffa, the tiger, Buonaparté, — all this faded away and made room in his mind for a radiance in which the pale marble phantom of Cæsar stood out serenely at an inaccessible height. The Emperor had never been to his father more than the beloved captain whom a man admires and for whom he devotes himself; but to Marius he was far more. He was the predestined constructor of the French group which succeeded the Roman group in the dominion of the universe; he was the prodigious architect of an earthquake, the successor of Charlemagne, Louis XI., Henri IV., Richelieu, Louis XIV., and the Committee of Public Safety. He had doubtless his spots, his faults, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

even his crimes, that is to say, he was a man; but he was august in his faults, brilliant in his spots, and powerful in his crime. He was the predestined man who compelled all nations to say, — "The great nation. He was even more; he was the very incarnation of France, conquering Europe by the sword he held, and the world by the lustre which he emitted. Marius saw in Bonaparte the dazzling spectre which will ever stand on the frontier and guard the future. He was a despot, but a dictator, — a despot resulting from a republic and completing a revolution. Napoleon became for him the man-people, as the Saviour is the man-God.

As we see, after the fashion of all new converts to a religion, his conversion intoxicated him and he dashed into faith and went too far. His nature was so; once upon an incline, it was impossible to check himself. Fanaticism for the sword seized upon him, and complicated in his mind the enthusiasm for the idea. He did not perceive that he admired force as well as genius, that is to say, filled up the two shrines of his idolatry, — on one side that which is divine, on the other that which is brutal. He also deceived himself on several other points, though in a different way; he admitted everything. There is a way of encountering error by going to meet the truth, and by a sort of violent good faith, which accepts everything unconditionally. Upon the new path he had entered, while judging the wrongs of the ancient régime and measuring the glory of Napoleon, he neglected attenuating circumstances.

However this might be, a prodigious step was

Digitized by Microsoft®

made; where he had once seen the downfall of monarchy he now saw the accession of France. The points of his moral compass were changed, and what had once been sunset was now sunrise; and all these revolutions took place in turns, without his family suspecting it. When, in this mysterious labor, he had entirely lost his old Bourbonic and Ultra skin, when he had pulled off the aristocrat, the Jacobite, and the Royalist, when he was a perfect Revolutionist, profoundly democratic, and almost republican, he went to an engraver's and ordered one hundred cards, with the address, "Baron Marius Pontmercy." This was but the logical consequence of the change which had taken place in him, — a change in which everything gravitated round his father. Still, as he knew nobody and could not show his cards at any porter's lodge, he put them in his pocket.

By another natural consequence, in proportion as he drew nearer to his father, his memory, and the things for which the Colonel had fought during five-and-twenty years, he drew away from his grandfather. As we said, M. Gillenormand's humor had not suited him for a long time past, and there already existed between them all the dissonances produced by the contact of a grave young man with a frivolous old man. The gayety of Géronte offends and exasperates the melancholy of Werther. So long as the same political opinions and ideas had been common to them, Marius met his grandfather upon them as on a bridge; but when the bridge fell there was a great gulf between them. And then, before all else, Marius had indescribable attacks of

Digitized by Microsoft®

revolt when he reflected that it was M. Gillenormand who, through stupid motives, pitilessly tore him from the Colonel, thus depriving father of son, and son of father. Through his reverence for his father, Marius had almost grown to have an aversion for his grandfather.

Nothing of this, however, was revealed in his demeanor; he merely became colder than before, laconic at meals, and rarely at home. When his aunt scolded him for it he was very gentle, and alleged as excuse his studies, examinations, conferences, etc. The grandfather, however, still adhered to his infallible diagnostic, — "He is in love; I know the symptoms." Marius was absent every now and then.

"Where can he go?" the aunt asked.

In one of his trips, which were always very short, he went to Montfermeil in order to obey his father's intimation, and sought for the ex-Sergeant of Waterloo, Thénardier the landlord. Thénardier had failed, the public-house was shut up, and no one knew what had become of him. In making this search Marius remained away for four days.

"He is decidedly getting out of order," said the grandfather.

They also fancied they could notice that he wore under his shirt something fastened round his neck by a black ribbon.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VII.

SOME PETTICOAT.

We have alluded to a lancer: he was a great-grand-nephew of M. Gillenormand's, on the father's side, who led a garrison life, far away from the domestic hearth. Lieutenant Théodule Gillenormand fulfilled all the conditions required for a man to be a pretty officer: he had a young lady's waist, a victorious way of clanking his sabre, and turned-up moustaches. He came very rarely to Paris, so rarely that Marius had never seen him, and the two cousins only knew each other by name. Théodule was, we think we said, the favorite of Aunt Gillenormand, who preferred him because she never saw him; for not seeing people allows of every possible perfection being attributed to them.

One morning Mlle. Gillenormand the elder returned to her apartments, as much affected as her general placidity would allow. Marius had again asked his grandfather's permission to make a short trip, adding that he wished to start that same evening. "Go," the grandfather answered; and he added to himself, as he pursed up his eye, "Another relapse of sleeping from home." Mlle. Gillenormand went up to her room greatly puzzled, and cast to the stair-

Digitized by Microsoft®

case this exclamation, "It's too much!" and this question, "But where is it that he goes?" She caught a glimpse of some more or less illicit love adventure, of a woman in the shadow, a meeting, a mystery, and would not have felt vexed to have a closer peep at it through her spectacles. Scenting a mystery is like the first bite at a piece of scandal, and holy souls do not detest it. In the secret compartments of bigotry there is some curiosity for scandal.

She was, therefore, suffering from a vague appetite to learn a story. In order to distract this curiosity, which agitated her a little beyond her wont, she took refuge in her talents, and began festooning with cotton upon cotton one of those embroideries of the Empire and the Restoration, in which there are a great many cabriolet wheels. It was a clumsy job, and the workwoman was awkward. She had been sitting over it for some hours when the door opened. Mlle. Gillenormand raised her nose, and saw Lieutenant Théodule before her, making his regulation salute. She uttered a cry of delight; for a woman may be old, a prude, devout, and an aunt, but she is always glad to see a lancer enter her room.

"You here, Théodule!" she exclaimed.

"In passing, my dear aunt."

"Well, kiss me."

"There," said Théodule, as he kissed her. Aunt Gillenormand walked to her secretaire and opened it.

"You will stop the week out?"

"My dear aunt, I am off again to-night."

"Impossible!"

Digitized by Microsoft®

"Mathematically."

"Stay, my little Théodule, I beg of you."

"The heart says Yes, but duty says No. The story is very simple; we are changing garrison; we were at Melun, and are sent to Gaillon. In order to go to the new garrison we were obliged to pass through Paris, and I said to myself, 'I will go and see my aunt.'"

"And here's for your trouble."

And she slipped ten louis into his hand.

"You mean to say for my pleasure, dear aunt."

Théodule kissed her a second time, and she had the pleasure of having her neck slightly grazed by his gold-laced collar.

"Are you travelling on horseback, with your regiment?"

"No, my aunt: I have come to see you by special permission. My servant is leading my horse, and I shall travel by the diligence. By the way, there is one thing I want to ask you."

"What is it?"

"It appears that my cousin Marius Pontmercy is going on a journey too?"

"How do you know that?" the aunt said, her curiosity being greatly tickled.

"On reaching Paris I went to the coach-office to take my place in the *coupé*."

"Well?"

"A traveller had already taken a seat in the Impériale, and I saw his name in the way-bill: it was Marius Pontmercy."

"Oh, the scamp!" the aunt exclaimed. "Ah!

Digitized by Microsoft®

your cousin is not a steady lad like you. To think that he is going to pass the night in a diligence!"

"Like myself."

"You do it through duty, but he does it through disorder."

"The deuce!" said Théodule.

Here an event occurred to Mlle. Gillenormand the elder: she had an idea. If she had been a man she would have struck her forehead. She addressed Théodule.

"You are aware that your cousin does not know you?"

"I have seen him, but he never deigned to notice me."

"Where is the diligence going to?"

"To Andelys."

"Is Marius going there?"

"Unless he stops on the road, like myself. I get out at Vernon, to take the Gaillon coach. I know nothing about Marius's route."

"Marius! what an odious name! What an idea it was to call him that! Well, your name, at least, is Théodule."

"I would rather it was Alfred," the officer said.

"Listen, Théodule; Marius absents himself from the house."

"Eh, eh!"

"He goes about the country."

"Ah, ah!"

"He sleeps out."

"Oh, oh!"

"We should like to know the meaning of all this."

Digitized by Microsoft®

Théodule replied, with the calmness of a bronze man, "Some petticoat!"

And with that inward chuckle which evidences a certainty, he added, "a girl!"

"That is evident!" the aunt exclaimed, who believed that she heard M. Gillenormand speaking, and who felt his conviction issue irresistibly from that word "girl," accentuated almost in the same way by grand-uncle and grand-nephew. She continued, —

"Do us a pleasure by following Marius a little. As he does not know you, that will be an easy matter. Since there is a girl in the case, try to get a look at her, and write and tell us all about it, for it will amuse grandfather."

Théodule had no excessive inclination for this sort of watching, but he was greatly affected by the ten louis, and he believed he could see a possible continuation of such gifts. He accepted the commission, and said, "As you please, aunt," and added in an aside, "I am a Duenna now!"

Mlle. Gillenormand kissed him.

"You would not play such tricks as that, Théodule, for you obey discipline, are the slave of duty, and a scrupulous man, and would never leave your family to go and see one of those creatures."

The lancer made the satisfied grimace of Cartouche when praised for his probity.

Marius, on the evening that followed this dialogue, got into the diligence, not suspecting that he was watched. As for the watcher, the first thing he did was to fall asleep, and his sleep was complete and conscientious. Argus snored the whole night. At

Digitized by Microsoft®

daybreak the guard shouted, "Vernon; passengers for Vernon, get out here!" and Lieutenant Théodule got out.

"All right," he growled, still half asleep, "I get out here."

Then his memory growing gradually clearer, he thought of his aunt, the ten louis, and the account he had promised to render of Marius's sayings and doings. This made him laugh.

"He is probably no longer in the coach," he thought, while buttoning up his jacket. "He may have stopped at Poissy, he may have stopped at Triel; if he did not get out at Meulan, he may have done so at Mantes, unless he stopped at Rolleboise, or only went as far as Passy, with the choice of turning on his left to Évreux, or on his right to Laroche Guyon. Run after him, my aunt. What the deuce shall I write to the old lady?"

At this moment the leg of a black trouser appeared against the window-pane of the *coupé*.

"Can it be Marius?" the Lieutenant said.

It was Marius. A little peasant girl was offering flowers to the passengers, and crying, "Bouquets for your ladies." Marius went up to her, and bought the finest flowers in her basket.

"By Jove!" said Théodule, as he leaped out of the *coupé*, "the affair is growing piquant. Who the deuce is he going to carry those flowers to? She must be a deucedly pretty woman to deserve so handsome a bouquet. I must have a look at her."

And then he began following Marius, no longer by order, but through personal curiosity, like those

Digitized by Microsoft®

dogs which hunt on their own account. Marius paid no attention to Théodule. Some elegant women were getting out of the diligence, but he did not look at them ; he seemed to see nothing around him.

" He must be preciously in love," Théodule thought. Marius proceeded towards the church.

" That 's glorious ! " Théodule said to himself ; " the church, that 's the thing. Rendezvous spiced with a small amount of Mass are the best. Nothing is so exquisite as an ogle exchanged in the presence of the Virgin."

On reaching the church, Marius did not go in, but disappeared behind one of the buttresses of the apse.

" The meeting outside," Théodule said ; " now for a look at the girl."

And he walked on tiptoe up to the corner which Marius had gone round, and on reaching it stopped in stupefaction. Marius, with his forehead in both his hands, was kneeling in the grass upon a tomb, and had spread his flowers out over it. At the head of the grave was a cross of black wood, with this name in white letters, — " COLONEL BARON PONTMERCY." Marius could be heard sobbing.

The girl was a tomb.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VIII.

MARBLE AGAINST GRANITE.

It is hither that Marius had come the first time that he absented himself from Paris; it was to this spot he retired each time that M. Gillenormand said, —"He sleeps out." Lieutenant Théodule was absolutely discountenanced by this unexpected elbowing of a tomb, and felt a disagreeable and singular sensation, which he was incapable of analyzing, and which was composed of respect for a tomb, mingled with respect for a colonel. He fell back, leaving Marius alone in the cemetery, and there was discipline in this retreat; death appeared to him wearing heavy epaulettes, and he almost gave it the military salute. Not knowing what to write to his aunt, he resolved not to write at all; and there would probably have been no result from Théodule's discovery of Marius's amour had not, by one of those mysterious arrangements so frequent in accident, the scene at Vernon had almost immediately a sort of counterpart in Paris.

Marius returned from Vernon very early on the morning of the third day, and wearied by two nights spent in a diligence, and feeling the necessity of repairing his want of sleep by an hour's swimming exercise, he hurried up to his room, only took the

Digitized by Microsoft®

time to take off his travelling coat and the black ribbon which he had round his neck, and went to the bath. M. Gillenormand, who rose at an early hour like all old men who are in good health, heard him come in, and hastened as quick as his old legs would carry him up the stairs leading to Marius's garret, in order to welcome him back, and try and discover his movements. But the young man had taken less time in descending than the octogenarian in ascending, and when Father Gillenormand entered the garret Marius was no longer there. The bed had been unoccupied, and on it lay the coat and black ribbon unsuspectingly.

"I prefer that," said M. Gillenormand, and a moment later he entered the drawing-room, where Mlle. Gillenormand the elder was already seated embroidering her cabriolet wheels. The entrance was triumphant; M. Gillenormand held in one hand the coat, in the other the neck-ribbon, and shouted;—

"Victory! we are going to penetrate the mystery, we are going to know the cream of the joke, we are going to lay our hands on the libertinage of our cunning gentleman. Here is the romance itself, for I have the portrait."

In fact, a box of shagreen leather, much like a miniature, was suspended from the ribbon. The old man took hold of this box, and looked at it for some time without opening, with the air of pleasure, eagerness, and anger of a poor starving fellow who sees a splendid dinner, of which he will have no share, carried past under his nose.

"It is evidently a portrait, and I am up to that

Digitized by Microsoft®

sort of thing. It is worn tenderly on the heart, — what asses they are! Some abominable wench, who will probably make me shudder; for young men have such bad tastes now-a-days."

"Let us look, father," the old maid said.

The box opened by pressing a spring, but they only found in it a carefully folded-up paper.

"*From the same to the same,*" said M. Gillenormand, bursting into a laugh. "I know what it is, — a billet-doux!"

"Indeed! let us read it," said the aunt; and she put on her spectacles. They unfolded the paper and read as follows, —

"*For my son.* The Emperor made me a Baron on the field of Waterloo, and as the Restoration contests this title which I purchased with my blood, my son will assume it and wear it; of course he will be worthy of it."

What the father and daughter felt, it is not possible to describe; but they were chilled as if by the breath of a death's-head. They did not exchange a syllable. M. Gillenormand merely said in a low voice, and as if speaking to himself, "It is that trooper's handwriting." The aunt examined the slip of paper, turned it about in all directions, and then placed it again in the box.

At the same instant a small square packet wrapped up in blue paper fell from a pocket of the great-coat. Mlle. Gillenormand picked it up and opened the blue paper. It contained Marius's one hundred cards, and she passed one to M. Gillenormand, who read, "Baron Marius Pontmercy." The

Digitized by Microsoft®

old man rang, and Nicolette came in. M. Gillenormand took the ribbon, the box, and the coat, threw them on the ground in the middle of the room, and said, —

"Remove that rubbish."

A long hour passed in the deepest silence; the old man and the old maid were sitting back to back and thinking, probably both of the same things. At the end of this hour, Mlle. Gillenormand said, — "Very pretty!" A few minutes after, Marius came in; even before he crossed the threshold he perceived his grandfather holding one of his cards in his hand. On seeing Marius he exclaimed, with his air of bourgeois and grimacing superiority, which had something crushing about it, —

"Stay! stay! stay! stay! stay! You are a Baron at present; I must congratulate you. What does this mean?"

Marius blushed slightly, and answered, —

"It means that I am my father's son."

M. Gillenormand left off laughing, and said harshly, "I am your father."

"My father," Marius continued with downcast eyes and a stern air, "was an humble and heroic man, who gloriously served the Republic of France, who was great in the greatest history which men have ever made, who lived for a quarter of a century in a bivouac, by day under a shower of grape-shot and bullets, and at night in snow, mud, wind, and rain. He was a man who took two flags, received twenty wounds, died in forgetfulness and abandonment, and who had never committed but one fault,

Digitized by Microsoft®

that of loving too dearly two ungrateful beings, — his country and myself."

This was more than M. Gillenormand could bear; at the word Republic he had risen, or, more correctly, sprung up. Each of the words that Marius had just uttered had produced on the old gentleman's face the same effect as the blast of a forge-bellows upon a burning log. From gloomy he became red, from red, purple, and from purple, flaming.

"Marius," he shouted, "you abominable boy! I know not who your father was, and do not wish to know. I know nothing about it, but what I do know is, that there never were any but scoundrels among all those people; they were all rogues, assassins, red-caps, robbers! I say all, I say all! I know nobody! I say all; do you understand me, Marius? You must know that you are as much a Baron as my slipper is! They were all bandits who served Robespierre! they were all brigands who served B-u-o-naparté! all traitors who betrayed, betrayed, betrayed their legitimate king! all cowards who ran away from the Prussians and the English at Waterloo! That is what I know. If Monsieur your father was among them, I am ignorant of the fact, and am sorry for it. I am your humble servant!"

In his turn, Marius became the brand, and M. Gillenormand the bellows. Marius trembled all over, he knew not what to do, and his head was a-glow. He was the priest who sees his consecrated wafers cast to the wind, the Fakir who notices a passer-by spit on his idol. It was impossible that such things could be said with impunity in his presence, but

Digitized by Microsoft®

what was he to do? His father had just been trampled under foot, and insulted in his presence; but by whom? By his grandfather. How was he to avenge the one without outraging the other? It was impossible for him to insult his grandfather, and equally impossible for him not to avenge his father. On one side was a sacred tomb, on the other was white hair. He tottered for a few moments like a drunken man, then raised his eyes, looked fixedly at his grandfather, and shouted in a thundering voice, —

"Down with the Bourbons, and that great pig of a Louis XVIII.!"

Louis XVIII. had been dead four years, but that made no difference to him. The old man, who had been scarlet, suddenly became whiter than his hair. He turned to a bust of the Duc de Berry which was on the mantel-piece, and bowed to it profoundly with a sort of singular majesty. Then he walked twice, slowly and silently, from the mantel-piece to the window, and from the window to the mantel-piece, crossing the whole room, and making the boards creak as if he were a walking marble statue. The second time he leaned over his daughter, who was looking at the disturbance with the stupor of an old sheep, and said to her with a smile which was almost calm, —

"A Baron like this gentleman and a bourgeois like myself can no longer remain beneath the same roof."

And suddenly drawing himself up, livid, trembling, and terrible, with his forehead dilated by the fearful radiance of passion, he stretched out his arm toward Marius, and shouted, "Begone!"

Digitized by Microsoft®

Marius left the house, and on the morrow M. Gillenormand said to his daughter, —

"You will send every six months sixty pistoles to that blood-drinker, and never mention his name to me."

Having an immense amount of fury to expend, and not knowing what to do with it, he continued to address his daughter as "you" instead of "thou" for upwards of three months.

Marius, on his side, left the house indignant, and a circumstance aggravated his exasperation. There are always small fatalities of this nature to complicate domestic dramas: the anger is augmented although the wrongs are not in reality increased. In hurriedly conveying, by the grandfather's order, Marius's rubbish to his bed-room, Nicolette, without noticing the fact, let fall, probably on the attic stairs, which were dark, the black shagreen case in which was the paper written by the Colonel. As neither could be found, Marius felt convinced that "Monsieur Gillenormand" — he never called him otherwise from that date — had thrown "his father's will" into the fire. He knew by heart the few lines written by the Colonel, and consequently nothing was lost; but the paper, the writing, this sacred relic, — all this was his heart. What had been done with it?

Marius went away without saying where he was going and without knowing, with thirty francs, his watch, and some clothes in a carpet-bag. He jumped into a cabriolet, engaged it by the hour, and proceeded at random towards the Pays Latin. What would become of Marius?

Digitized by Microsoft®

BOOK IV.

THE FRIENDS OF THE A. B. C.

CHAPTER I.

A GROUP THAT NEARLY BECAME HISTORICAL.

At this epoch, which was apparently careless, a certain revolutionary quivering was vaguely felt. There were breezes in the air which returned from the depths of '89 and '92; and the young men, if we may be forgiven the expression, were in the moulting stage. Men became transformed, almost without suspecting it, by the mere movement of time, for the hand which moves round the clock-face also moves in the mind. Each took the forward step he had to take; the Royalists became liberals, and the Liberals democrats. It was like a rising tide complicated by a thousand ebbs, and it is the peculiarity of ebbs to cause things to mingle. Hence came very singular combinations of ideas, and men adored liberty and Napoleon at the same time. We are writing history here, and such were the mirages of that period. Opinions pass through phases, and Voltairian royalism, a strange variety, had a no less strange pendant in Bonapartist liberalism.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Other groups of minds were more serious; at one spot principles were sounded, and at another men clung to their rights. They became impassioned for the absolute, and obtained glimpses of infinite realizations; for the absolute, through its very rigidity, causes minds to float in the illimitable ether. There is nothing like the dogma to originate a dream, and nothing like a dream to engender the future; the Utopia of to-day is flesh and bone to-morrow. Advanced opinions had a false bottom, and a commencement of mystery threatened "established order," which was suspicious and cunning. This is a most revolutionary sign. The after-thought of the authorities meets in the sap the after-thought of the people, and the incubation of revolutions is the reply to the premeditation of Coups d'État. There were not as yet in France any of those vast subjacent organizations, like the Tugenbund of Germany or the Carbonari of Italy; but here and there were dark subterranean passages with extensive ramifications. The Cougourde was started at Aix; and there was at Paris, among other affiliations of this nature, the society of the Friends of the A. B. C.

Who were the Friends of the A. B. C.? A society whose ostensible object was the education of children, but the real one the elevation of men. They called themselves friends of the A. B. C.; the *Abaissé* was the nation, and they wished to raise it. It would be wrong to laugh at this pun, for puns at times are serious in politics; witnesses of this are the *Castratus ad castra,* which made Narses-general

Digitized by Microsoft®

of an army; the *Barbari* and *Barberini; fueros fuegos; tu es Petrus et super hanc Petram*, etc., etc. The Friends of the A. B. C. were few in number; it was a secret society, in a state of embryo, and we might almost call it a coterie, if coteries produced heroes. They assembled at two places in Paris,—at a cabaret called *Corinthe* near the Halles, to which we shall revert hereafter; and near the Panthéon, in a small café on the Place St. Michel, known as the Café Musain, and now demolished: the first of these meeting-places was contiguous to the workmen, and the second to the students. The ordinary discussions of the Friends of the A. B. C. were held in a back room of the Café Musain. This room, some distance from the coffee-room, with which it communicated by a very long passage, had two windows and an issue by a secret staircase into the little Rue des Grés. They smoked, drank, played, and laughed there; they spoke very loudly about everything, and in a whisper about the other thing. On the wall hung an old map of France under the Republic, which would have been a sufficient hint for a police-agent.

Most of the Friends of the A. B. C. were students, who maintained a cordial understanding with a few workmen. Here are the names of the principal members, which belong in a certain measure to history,—Enjolras, Combeferre, Jean Prouvaire, Feuilly, Courfeyrac, Bahorel, Lesgle or Laigle, Joly, and Grantaire. These young men formed a species of family through their friendship, and all came from the South, excepting Laigle. This

Digitized by Microsoft®

group is remarkable, although it has vanished in the invisible depths which are behind us. At the point of this drama which we have now attained, it will not be labor lost, perhaps, to throw a ray of light upon these heads, before the reader watches them enter the shadows of a tragical adventure.

Enjolras, whom we named first, it will be seen afterwards why, was an only son, and rich. He was a charming young man, capable of becoming terrible; he was angelically beautiful, and looked like a stern Antinous. On noticing the pensive depth of his glance you might have fancied that he had gone through the revolutionary apocalypse in some preceding existence. He knew the traditions of it like an eye-witness, and was acquainted with all the minor details of the great thing. His was a pontifical and warlike nature, strange in a young man; he was a churchman and a militant; from the immediate point of view a soldier of democracy, but, above the contemporary movement, a priest of the ideal. He had a slightly red eyelid, a thick and easily disdainful lower lip, and a lofty forehead; a good deal of forehead on a face is like a good deal of sky in an horizon. Like certain young men of the beginning of the present century and the end of the last, who became illustrious at an early age, he looked excessively young, and was as fresh as a school-girl, though he had his hours of pallor. Although a man, he seemed still a boy, and his two-and-twenty years looked like only seventeen; he was serious, and did not appear to know

Digitized by Microsoft®

that there was on the earth a being called woman. He had only one passion, justice, and only one thought, overthrowing the obstacle. On the Mons Aventinus, he would have been Gracchus; in the Convention, he would have been St. Just. He scarcely noticed roses, was ignorant of spring, and did not hear the birds sing; the bare throat of Evadne would have affected him as little as it did Aristogiton; to him, as to Harmodius, flowers were only good to conceal the sword. He was severe in his pleasures, and before all that was not the Republic he chastely lowered his eyes; he was the marble lover of liberty. His language had a sharp inspiration and a species of rhythmic strain. Woe to the love which risked itself in his direction! If any grisette of the Place Cambray or the Rue St. Jean de Beauvais, seeing this figure just escaped from college, with a neck like that of a page, long light lashes, blue eyes, hair floating wildly in the breeze, pink cheeks, cherry lips, and exquisite teeth, had felt a longing for all this dawn, and tried the effect of her charms upon Enjolras, a formidable look of surprise would have suddenly shown her the abyss, and taught her not to confound the avenging cherub of Ezekiel with the gallant cherub of Beaumarchais.

By the side of Enjolras, who represented the logic of the Revolution, Combeferre represented its philosophy. Between the logic and the philosophy of revolutions there is this difference, that the logic may conclude in war, while its philosophy can only lead to peace. Combeferre completed and rectified En-

Digitized by Microsoft®

jolras; he was not so tall, but broader. He wished that the extended principles of general ideas should be poured over minds, and said, "Revolution but civilization!" and he opened the vast blue horizon around the peaked mountain. Hence there was something accessible and practicable in all Combeferre's views; and the Revolution with him was fitter to breathe than with Enjolras. Enjolras expressed its divine right and Combeferre its natural right; and while the former clung to Robespierre, the latter bordered upon Condorcet. Combeferre loved more than Enjolras the ordinary life of mankind; and if these two young men had gained a place in history, the one would have been the just man, the other the sage. Enjolras was more manly, Combeferre more humane, and the distinction between them was that between *homo* and *vir*. Combeferre was gentle as Enjolras was stern, through natural whiteness; he loved the word citizen, but preferred man, and would willingly have said *Hombre*, like the Spaniards. He read everything, went to the theatres, attended the public lectures, learned from Arago the polarization of light, and grew quite excited about a lecture in which Geoffroy St. Hilaire explained the double functions of the external and internal carotid arteries, the one which makes the face, and the other which produces the brain; he was conversant with, and followed, science step by step, confronted St. Simon with Fourier, deciphered hieroglyphics, broke pebbles which he found, drew from memory a bombyx butterfly, pointed out the errors in French in the Dictionary of the Academy, studied Puységur and

Digitized by Microsoft®

Deleuze, affirmed nothing, not even miracles, denied nothing, not even ghosts, turned over the file of the *Moniteur* and reflected. He declared that the future is in the hand of the schoolmaster, and busied himself with educational questions. He wished that society should labor without relaxation at the elevation of the intellectual and moral standard, at coining science, bringing ideas into circulation, and making the minds of youth grow; and he feared that the present poverty of methods, the wretchedness from the literary point of view of confining studies to two or three centuries called classical, the tyrannical dogmatism of official pedants, scholastic prejudices, and routine would in the end convert our colleges into artificial oyster-beds. He was learned, a purist, polite, and polytechnic, a delver, and at the time pensive, "even to a chimera," as his friends said. He believed in all dreams, — railways, the suppression of suffering in surgical operations, fixing the image of the camera obscura, electric telegraphy, and the steering of balloons. He was but slightly terrified by the citadels built on all sides against the human race by superstitions, despotisms, and prejudices; for he was one of those men who think that science will in the end turn the position. Enjolras was a chief, and Combeferre a guide; you would have liked to fight under one and march with the other. Not that Combeferre was incapable of fighting, he did not refuse to seize obstacles round the waist and attack them by main force; but it pleased him better to bring the human race into harmony with its destiny gradually, by the instruction of axioms and the pro-

Digitized by Microsoft®

mulgation of positive laws; and with a choice between two lights, his inclination was for illumination rather than fire. A fire may certainly produce a dawn, but why not wait for daybreak? A volcano illumines, but the sun does so far better. Combeferre perhaps preferred the whiteness of the beautiful to the flashing of the sublime; and a brightness clouded by smoke, a progress purchased by violence, only half satisfied his tender and serious mind. A headlong hurling of a people into the truth, a '93, startled him; still, stagnation was more repulsive to him, for he smelt in it putrefaction and death. Altogether he liked foam better than miasma, and preferred the torrent to the sewer, and the Falls of Niagara to the Lake of Montfauçon. In a word, he desired neither halt nor haste; and while his tumultuous friends, who were chivalrously attracted by the absolute, adored and summoned the splendid revolutionary adventurer, Combeferre inclined to leave progress, right progress, to act: it might be cold but it was pure, methodical but irreproachable, and phlegmatic but imperturbable. Combeferre would have knelt down and prayed that this future might arrive with all its candor, and that nothing might disturb the immense virtuous evolution of the peoples. "The good must be innocent," he repeated incessantly. And in truth, if the grandeur of the revolution is to look fixedly at the dazzling ideal, and fly toward it through the lightning, with blood and fire in the claws, the beauty of progress is to be unspotted; and there is between Washington, who represents the one, and Danton, who is the incarnation of the other,

Digitized by Microsoft

the same difference as that which separates the angel with the swan's wings from the angel with the eagle's wings.

Jean Prouvaire was of an even softer tinge than Combeferre; he was called "Jehan," through that little momentary fantasy which was blended with the powerful and profound movement from which issued the study of the Middle Ages, so essential. Jean Prouvaire was in love, cultivated a pot of flowers, played the flute, wrote verses, loved the people, pitied women, wept over children, confounded in the same confidence the future and God, and blamed the Revolution for having caused a royal head to fall, that of André Chénier. He had a voice which was habitually delicate, and suddenly became masculine; he was erudite, and almost an Orientalist. He was good before all, and through a motive which those will easily understand who know how closely goodness borders on grandeur, — he loved immensity in poetry. He knew Italian, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and he employed his knowledge to read only four poets, — Dante, Juvenal, Æschylus, and Isaiah. In French he preferred Corneille to Racine, and Agrippa d'Aubigné to Corneille. He was fond of strolling about the fields of wild oats and corn-flowers, and occupied himself with clouds almost as much as with events. His mind had two attitudes, — one turned to man, the other to God; he either studied or contemplated. The whole day long he studied social questions, — wages, capital, credit, marriage, religion, liberty of thought, liberty of love, education, the penal code, wretchedness, partnership, property, production, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

division, that enigma of the lower world which casts a shadow over the human ant-heap, and at night he looked at the stars, those enormous beings. Like Enjolras, he was rich, and an only son; he talked softly, hung his head, looked down, smiled with an embarrassed air, dressed badly, had an awkward gait, blushed at a nothing, and was very timid; with all that he was intrepid.

Feuilly was a journeyman fan-maker, doubly an orphan, who laboriously earned three francs a day, and had only one idea, — to deliver the world. He had another preoccupation as well, instructing himself, which he called self-deliverance. He had taught himself to read and write, and all that he knew he had learned alone. Feuilly had a generous heart, and hugged the world. This orphan had adopted the peoples, and as he had no mother, he meditated on his country. He had wished that there should not be in the world a man who had no country, and he brooded over what we now call the "idea of nationalities" with the profound divination of the man of the people. He had studied history expressly that he might be indignant with a knowledge of the fact, and in this youthful assembly of Utopians who were specially interested about France, he represented the foreign element. His specialty was Greece, Poland, Roumania, Hungary, and Italy; he pronounced these names incessantly, in season and out of season, with the tenacity of right. The violations committed by Turkey on Greece and Thessaly, of Russia on Warsaw, and Austria on Venice, exasperated him, and above all the great highway

Digitized by Microsoft®

robbery of 1772 aroused him. There can be no more sovereign eloquence than truth in indignation; and he was eloquent with that eloquence. He never left off talking about the infamous date 1772, the noble and valiant people suppressed by treachery, this crime committed by three accomplices, and the monstrous ambush, which is the prototype and pattern of all those frightful suppressions of states, which have since struck several nations, and have, so to speak, erased their name from the baptismal register. All the social assaults of the present day emanate from the division of Poland, and it is a theorem to which all our political crimes are corollaries. There is not a despot or a traitor who for a century past has not revised, confirmed, countersigned, and margined with the words *ne varietur*, the division of Poland. When we consult the list of modern treasons this appears the first, and the Congress of Vienna consulted this crime ere it consummated its own; 1772 sounds the view-halloo, and 1815 witnesses the quarry of the stag. Such was Feuilly's usual text. This poor workman had made himself the guardian of Justice, and she rewarded him by making him grand. In truth, there is an eternity in justice, and Warsaw can no more be Tartar than Venice can be Teutonic. Kings lose their time and their honor over such things. Sooner or later the submerged country floats on the surface and reappears. Greece becomes Greece once more, and Italy, Italy. The protest of right against deeds persists forever, and there is no law of limitations for the robbery of a nation. Such superior swindles

Digitized by Microsoft®

have no future, and the mark cannot be taken out of a nation like a handkerchief.

Courfeyrac had a father who was known as M. de Courfeyrac. One of the incorrect ideas of the bourgeoisie of the Restoration in the matter of the aristocracy and the nobility was a belief in the particle. The particle, as we know, has no meaning but the bourgeois of the time of the *Minerve* esteemed this poor *de* so highly that persons thought themselves obliged to abdicate it. M. de Chauvelin called himself M. Chauvelin; M. de Caumartin, M. Caumartin; M. de Constant de Rebecque, Benjamin Constant, and M. de Lafayette, M. Lafayette. Courfeyrac was unwilling to remain behindhand, and called himself Courfeyrac quite short. As concerns this gentleman, we might almost stop here and content ourselves with saying as to the rest, in Courfeyrac you see Tholomyès; Courfeyrac, in fact, had those sallies of youth which might be called a mental *beauté du diable.* At a later date this expires like the prettiness of the kitten; and all this grace produces, upon two feet the bourgeois, and on four paws the tom-cat.

The generations which pass through the schools, and the successive levies of youth, transmit this species of wit from one to the other, and pass it from hand to hand, *quasi cursores*, nearly always the same; so that, as we have said, the first comer who had listened to Courfeyrac in 1828 might have fancied he was hearing Tholomyès in 1817. The only thing was that Courfeyrac was an honest fellow, and beneath an apparent external similitude, the difference

Digitized by Microsoft®

between Tholomyès and himself was great, and the latent man who existed within them was quite different in the former from what it was in the latter. In Tholomyès there was an attorney, and in Courfeyrac a Paladin; Enjolras was the chief, Combeferre the guide, and Courfeyrac the centre. The others gave more light, but he produced more heat; and he had in truth all the qualities of a centre, in the shape of roundness and radiation.

Bahorel had been mixed up in the sanguinary tumult of June, 1822, on the occasion of the burial of young Lallemand. Bahorel was a being of good temper and bad company, brave and a spendthrift, prodigal and generous, chattering and eloquent, bold and insolent, and the very best clay for the devil's moulding imaginable. He displayed daring waistcoats and scarlet opinions; he was a turbulent on a grand scale, that is to say, that he liked nothing so much as a quarrel unless it were an émeute, and nothing so much as an émeute except a revolution. He was ever ready to break a pane of glass, tear up the paving-stones, and demolish a government, in order to see the effect; he was a student in his eleventh year. He sniffed at the law, but did not practise it, and he had taken as his motto, "Never a lawyer," and as his coat of arms a night-table surmounted by a square cap. Whenever he passed in front of the law-school, which rarely happened to him, he buttoned up his frock-coat and took hygienic precautions. He said of the school gate, "What a fierce old man!" and of the Dean M. Devincourt, "What a monument!" He found in

Digitized by Microsoft®

his lectures a subject for coarse songs, and in his professors an occasion for laughter. He spent in doing nothing a very considerable allowance, something like three thousand francs. His parents were peasants in whom he had inculcated a respect for their son. He used to say of them, "They are peasants, and not towns-people, that is why they are so intelligent." Bahorel, as a capricious man, visited several cafés; and while the others had habits he had none. He strolled about: to err is human, to stroll is Parisian. Altogether, he had a penetrating mind, and thought more than people fancied. He served as the connecting link between the Friends of the A. B. C. and other groups which were still unformed, but which were to be constituted at a later date.

There was in this assembly of young men a bald-headed member. The Marquis d'Avaray, whom Louis XVIII. made a duke because he helped him to get into a hired cab on the day when he emigrated, used to tell how, when the King landed in 1814 at Calais upon his return to France, a man handed him a petition.

"What do you want?" the King said.

"A postmastership, Sire."

"What is your name?"

"L'Aigle."

The King frowned, but looked at the signature of the petition, and read the name thus written, LESGLE. This, anything but Bonapartist orthography, touched the King, and he began smiling. "Sire," the man with the petition went on, "my

Digitized by Microsoft®

ancestor was a whipper-in of the name of Lesgueules, and my name came from that. I called myself Lesgueules, by contraction Lesgle, and by corruption L'Aigle." This remark caused the King to smile still more, and at a later date he gave the man the post-office at Meaux, purposely or through a mistake. The bald Mentor of the group was son of this Lesgle or Legle, and signed himself Legle (of Meaux.) His comrades, to shorten this, called him Bossuet.

Bossuet was a merry fellow, who was unlucky, and his specialty was to succeed in nothing. *Per contra*, he laughed at everything. At the age of five-and-twenty he was bald; his father left him a house and a field; but the son knew nothing so pressing as to lose them both in a swindling speculation, and nothing was left him. He had learning and sense, but miscarried; he failed in everything, and everything cozened him; whatever he built up broke down under him. If he chopped wood, he cut his fingers; and if he had a mistress, he speedily discovered that she had also a friend. At every moment some misfortune happened to him, and hence came his joviality; and he used to say, "I live under the roof of falling tiles." Feeling but slight astonishment, for every accident was foreseen by him, he accepted ill-luck serenely, and smiled at the pin-pricks of destiny like a man who is listening to a good joke. He was poor, but his wallet of good-temper was inexhaustible; he speedily reached his last halfpenny, but never his last laugh. When adversity entered his room he bowed to his old acquaintance cordially; he tickled catastrophes in the ribs,

Digitized by Microsoft®

and was so familiar with fatality as to call it by a nickname.

These persecutions of fate had rendered him inventive, and he was full of resources. He had no money, but contrived to make "an unbridled outlay" whenever he thought proper. One night he went so far as to devour a hundred francs in a supper with a girl, which inspired him in the middle of the orgie with the memorable remark, "Fille de cinq Louis (Saint Louis), pull off my boots." Bossuet was advancing slowly to the legal profession, and studied law much after the fashion of Bahorel. Bossuet had but little domicile, at times none at all, and he lived first with one and then with the other, but most frequently with Joly.

Joly was a student of medicine, of two years' younger standing than Bossuet, and was the young imaginary sick man. What he had gained by his medical studies was to be more a patient than a doctor, for at the age of twenty-three he fancied himself a valetudinarian, and spent his life in looking at his tongue in a mirror. He declared that a man becomes magnetized like a needle, and in his room he placed his bed with the head to the south and the feet to the north, so that at night the circulation of his blood might not be impeded by the great magnetic current of the globe. In storms he felt his pulse, but for all that was the gayest of all. All these incoherences, youth, mania, dyspepsia, and fun, lived comfortably together, and the result was an eccentric and agreeable being, whom his comrades, lavish of liquid consonants, called Jolllly. Joly was

Digitized by Microsoft®

accustomed to touch his nose with the end of his cane, which is the sign of a sagacious mind.

All these young men, who differed so greatly, and of whom, after all, we must speak seriously, had the same religion, — Progress. They were all the direct sons of the French Revolution, and the lightest among them became serious when pronouncing the date of '89. Their fathers in the flesh were, or had been, *feuilleants*, royalists, or doctrinaires, but that was of little consequence; this pell-mell, anterior to themselves, who were young, did not concern them, and the pure blood of principles flowed in their veins; they attached themselves, without any intermediate tinge, to incorruptible right and absolute duty. Confederates and initiated, they secretly sketched the ideal.

Amid all these impassioned hearts and convinced minds there was a sceptic. How did he get there? Through juxtaposition. The name of this sceptic was Grantaire, and he usually wrote it after the manner of a rebus: R — (Grand R., i. e. Grantaire). Grantaire was a man who carefully avoided believing in anything; he was, however, one of these students who had learned the most during a Parisian residence. He knew that the best coffee was at Lemblier's, and the best billiard-table at the Café Voltaire; that excellent cakes and agreeable girls could be found at the Hermitage on the Boulevard du Maine, spatchcocks at Mother Saquet's, excellent matelottes at the Barrière de la Cunette, and a peculiar white wine at the Barrière du Combat. Besides all this, he was a mighty drinker. He was abominably ugly, and Irma

Digitized by Microsoft®

Boissy, the prettiest boot-stitcher of that day, in her indignation at his ugliness, passed the verdict, — "Grantaire is impossible." But Grantaire's fatuity was not disconcerted by this. He looked tenderly and fixedly at every woman, and assumed an expression of "If I only liked!" and he tried to make his companions believe that he was in general request with the sex.

All such words as rights of the people, rights of man, the social contract, the French Revolution, republic, democracy, humanity, civilization, progress, had as good as no meaning with Grantaire, and he smiled at them. Scepticism, that curse of the intellect, had not left him one whole idea in his mind. He lived in irony, and his axiom was, "There is only one thing certain, my full glass." He ridiculed every act of devotion in every party, — the brother as much as the father, young Robespierre as heartily as Loizerolles. "They made great progress by dying," he would exclaim; and would say of the crucifix, "There is a gallows which was successful." Idler, gambler, libertine, and often intoxicated, he annoyed these young democrats by incessantly singing, "*J'aimons les filles et j'aimons le bon vin*," to the tune of "Long live Henri IV."

This sceptic, however, had a fanaticism; it was neither an idea, a dogma, an act, nor a sense: it was a man, — Enjolras. Grantaire admired, loved, and revered Enjolras. Whom did this anarchical doubter cling to in this phalanx of absolute minds? To the most absolute. In what way did Enjolras subjugate him, — by ideas? No, but by character. This is a

Digitized by Microsoft®

frequently-observed phenomenon, and a sceptic who clings to a believer is as simple as the law of complementary colors. What we do not possess attracts us; no one loves daylight like the blind man; the dwarf adores the drum-major, and the frog has its eyes constantly fixed on heaven to see the bird fly. Grantaire, in whom doubt grovelled, liked to see faith soaring in Enjolras, and he felt the want of him, without clearly understanding it, or even dreaming of explaining the fact to himself. This chaste, healthy, firm, upright, harsh, and candid nature charmed him, and he instinctively admired his opposite. His soft, yielding, dislocated, sickly, and shapeless ideas attached themselves to Enjolras as to a spinal column, and his mental vertebra supported itself by this firmness. Grantaire, by the side of Enjolras, became somebody again; and he was, moreover, himself composed of two apparently irreconcilable elements, — he was ironical and cordial. His mind could do without belief, but his heart could not do without friendship. This is a profound contradiction, for an affection is a conviction; but his nature was so. There are some men apparently born to be the reverse of the coin, and their names are Pollux, Patroclus, Nisus, Eudamidas, Ephestion, and Pechmeja. They only live on the condition of being backed by another man; their name is a continuation, and is never written except preceded by the conjunction *and;* their existence is not their own, but is the other side of a destiny which is not theirs. Grantaire was one of these men.

We might almost say that affinities commence

Digitized by Microsoft®

with the letters of the alphabet, and in the series, O and P are almost inseparable. You may, as you please, say O and P, or Orestes and Pylades. Grantaire, a true satellite of Enjolras, dwelt in this circle of young men; he lived there, he solely enjoyed himself there, and he followed them everywhere. His delight was to see their shadows coming and going through the fumes of wine, and he was tolerated for his pleasant humor. Enjolras, as a believer, disdained this sceptic, and as a sober man loathed this drunkard, but he granted him a little haughty pity. Grantaire was an unaccepted Pylades: constantly repulsed by Enjolras, harshly rejected, and yet returning, he used to say of him, "What a splendid statue!"

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER II.

BOSSUET'S FUNERAL ORATION ON BLONDEAU.

On a certain afternoon, which, as we shall see, has some coincidence with the events recorded above, Laigle de Meaux was sensually leaning against the door-post of the Café Musain. He looked like a caryatid out for a holiday, and having nothing to carry but his reverie. Leaning on one's shoulder is a mode of lying down upright which is not disliked by dreamers. Laigle de Meaux was thinking, without melancholy, of a slight misadventure which had occurred to him on the previous day but one at the Law-school, and modified his personal plans for the future, which, as it was, were somewhat indistinct.

Reverie does not prevent a cabriolet from passing, or a dreamer from noticing the cabriolet. Laigle, whose eyes were absently wandering, saw through this somnambulism a two-wheeled vehicle moving across the Place St. Michel at a foot-pace and apparently undecided. What did this cab want? Why was it going so slowly? Laigle looked at it, and saw inside a young man seated by the side of the driver, and in front of the young man a carpet-bag. The bag displayed to passers-by this name, written in large black letters on the card sewn to

Digitized by Microsoft®

the cloth, MARIUS PONTMERCY. This name made Laigle change his attitude: he drew himself up, and shouted to the young man in the cab, "M. Marius Pontmercy!"

The cab stopped, on being thus hailed, and the young man, who also appeared to be thinking deeply, raised his eyes.

"Hilloh!" he said.

"Are you M. Pontmercy?"

"Yes."

"I was looking for you," Laigle of Meaux continued.

"How so?" asked Marius, for it was really he, who had just left his grandfather's and had before him a face which he saw for the first time. "I do not know you."

"And I don't know you either."

Marius fancied that he had to do with a practical joker, and, as he was not in the best of tempers at the moment, frowned. Laigle imperturbably continued, —

"You were not at lecture the day before yesterday!"

"Very possibly."

"It is certain."

"Are you a student?" Marius asked.

"Yes, sir, like yourself. The day before yesterday I entered the Law-school by chance; as you know, a man has an idea like that sometimes. The Professor was engaged in calling over the names, and you are aware how ridiculously strict they are in the school at the present moment. Upon the third call remaining unanswered, your name is erased from the list, and sixty francs are gone."

Digitized by Microsoft®

Marius began to listen, and Laigle continued, —

"It was Blondeau who was calling over. You know Blondeau has a pointed and most malicious nose, and scents the absent with delight. He craftily began with the letter P, and I did not listen, because I was not compromised by that letter. The roll-call went on capitally, there was no erasure, and the universe was present. Blondeau was sad, and I said to myself aside, 'Blondeau, my love, you will not perform the slightest execution to-day.' All at once Blondeau calls out, 'Marius Pontmercy!' No one answered, and so Blondeau, full of hope, repeats in a louder voice, 'Marius Pontmercy!' and takes up his pen. I have bowels, sir, and said to myself hurriedly, 'The name of a good fellow is going to be erased. Attention! he is not a proper student, a student who studies, a reading man, a pedantic sap, strong in science, literature, theology, and philosophy. No, he is an honorable idler, who lounges about, enjoys the country, cultivates the grisette, pays his court to the ladies, and is perhaps with my mistress at this moment. I must save him: death to Blondeau!' At this moment Blondeau dipped his pen, black with erasures, into the ink, looked round his audience, and repeated for the third time, 'Marius Pontmercy!' I answered, 'Here!' and so your name was not erased."

"Sir!" Marius exclaimed.

"And mine was," Laigle of Meaux added.

"I do not understand you," said Marius.

Laigle continued, —

"And yet it was very simple. I was near the desk

Digitized by Microsoft®

to answer, and near the door to bolt. The Professor looked at me with a certain fixedness, and suddenly Blondeau, who must be the crafty nose to which Boileau refers, leaps to the letter L, which is my letter, for I come from Meaux, and my name is L'Aigle."

"L'Aigle!" Marius interrupted, "what a glorious name!"

"Blondeau arrives, sir, at that glorious name, and exclaims 'L'Aigle!' I answer, 'Here!' Then Blondeau looks at me with the gentleness of a tiger, smiles, and says, — 'If you are Pontmercy you are not Laigle,' a phrase which appears offensive to you, but which was only lugubrious for me. After saying this, he erased me."

Marius exclaimed, —

"I am really mortified, sir —"

"Before all," Laigle interrupted, "I ask leave to embalm Blondeau in a few phrases of heart-felt praise. I will suppose him dead, and there will not be much to alter in his thinness, paleness, coldness, stiffness, and smell, and I say, *Erudimini qui judicatis terram.* Here lies Blondeau the nosy, Blondeau Nasica, the ox of discipline, *bos disciplinæ*, the mastiff of duty, the angel of the roll-call, who was straight, square, exact, rigid, honest, and hideous. God erased him as he erased me."

Marius continued, "I am most grieved —"

"Young man," said Laigle, "let this serve you as a lesson; in future be punctual."

"I offer you a thousand apologies."

"And do not run the risk of getting your neighbor erased."

Digitized by Microsoft®

"I am in despair—"

Laigle burst into a laugh. "And I am enchanted. I was on the downward road to become a lawyer, and this erasure saves me. I renounce the triumphs of the bar. I will not defend the orphan or attack the widow. I have obtained my expulsion, and I am indebted to you for it, M. Pontmercy. I intend to pay you a solemn visit of thanks. Where do you live?"

"In this cab," said Marius.

"A sign of opulence," Laigle remarked calmly; "I congratulate you, for you have apartments at nine thousand francs a year."

At this moment Courfeyrac came out of the café. Marius smiled sadly.

"I have been in this lodging for two hours, and am eager to leave it; but I do not know where to go."

"Come home with me," Courfeyrac said to him.

"I ought to have the priority," Laigle observed; "but then I have no home."

"Hold your tongue, Bossuet," Courfeyrac remarked.

"Bossuet!" said Marius. "Why, you told me your name was Laigle."

"Of Meaux," Laigle answered; "metaphorically, Bossuet."

Courfeyrac got into the cab.

"Hôtel de la Porte St. Jacques, driver," he said.

The same evening Marius was installed in a room in this house, next door to Courfeyrac.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER III.

MARIUS IS ASTONISHED.

In a few days Marius was a friend of Courfeyrac, for youth is the season of prompt weldings and rapid cicatrizations. Marius by the side of Courfeyrac breathed freely, a great novelty for him. Courfeyrac asked him no questions, and did not even think of doing so, for at that age faces tell everything at once, and words are unnecessary. There are some young men of whose countenances you may say that they gossip, — you look at them and know them. One morning, however, Courfeyrac suddenly asked him the question, —

"By the way, have you any political opinion?"

"Of course!" said Marius, almost offended by the question.

"What are you?"

"Bonapartist democrat."

"The gray color of the reassured mouse," Courfeyrac remarked.

On the next day he led Marius to the Café Musain, and whispered in his ear with a smile, "I must introduce you to the Revolution," and he led him to the room of the Friends of the A. B. C. He introduced him to his companions, saying in a low voice, "A pupil," which Marius did not at all comprehend.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Marius had fallen into a mental wasps' nest, but though he was silent and grave, he was not the less winged and armed.

Marius, hitherto solitary, and muttering soliloquies and asides through habit and taste, was somewhat startled by the swarm of young men around him. The tumultuous movement of all these minds at liberty and at work made his ideas whirl, and at times, in his confusion, they flew so far from him that he had a difficulty in finding them again. He heard philosophy, literature, art, history, and religion spoken of in an unexpected way; he caught a glimpse of strange aspects, and as he did not place them in perspective, he was not sure that he was not gazing at chaos. On giving up his grandfather's opinions for those of his father, he believed himself settled; but he now suspected, anxiously, and not daring to confess it to himself, that it was not so. The angle in which he looked at everything was beginning to be displaced afresh, and a certain oscillation shook all the horizons of his brain. It was a strange internal moving of furniture, and it almost made him ill.

It seemed as if there were no "sacred things" for these young men, and Marius heard singular remarks about all sorts of matters which were offensive to his still timid mind. A play-bill came under notice, adorned with the title of an old stock tragedy, of the so-called classical school. "Down with the tragedy dear to the bourgeois!" Bahorel shouted, and Marius heard Combeferre reply, —

"You are wrong, Bahorel. The cits love tragedy, and they must be left at peace upon that point.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Periwigged tragedy has a motive, and I am not one of those who for love of Æschylus contests its right to exist. There are sketches in nature and ready-made parodies in creation; a beak which is no beak, wings which are no wings, gills which are no gills, feet which are no feet, a dolorous cry which makes you inclined to laugh, — there you have the duck. Now, since poultry exist by the side of the bird, I do not see why classic tragedy should not exist face to face with ancient tragedy."

Or else it happened accidentally that Marius passed along the Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau between Enjolras and Courfeyrac, and the latter seized his arm.

"Pay attention! this is the Rue Plûtrière, now called Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau, on account of a singular family that lived here sixty years back, and they were Jean Jacques and Thérèse. From time to time little creatures were born; Thérèse fondled them, and Jean Jacques took them to the Foundling."

And Enjolras reproved Courfeyrac.

"Silence before Jean Jacques! I admire that man. I grant that he abandoned his children, but he adopted the people."

Not one of these young men ever uttered the words, — the Emperor; Jean Prouvaire alone sometimes said Napoleon; all the rest spoke of Bonaparte. Enjolras pronounced it *Buonaparte.* Marius was vaguely astonished. — *Initium sapientiæ.*

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER IV.

THE BACK ROOM OF THE CAFÉ MUSAIN.

One of the conversations among the young men at which Marius was present, and in which he mingled now and then, was a thorough shock for his mind. It came off in the back room of the Café Musain, and nearly all the Friends of the A. B. C. were collected on that occasion, and the chandelier was solemnly lighted. They talked about one thing and another, without passion and with noise, and with the exception of Enjolras and Marius, who were silent, each harangued somewhat hap-hazard. Conversations among chums at times display these peaceful tumults. It was a game and a jumble as much as a conversation; words were thrown and caught up, and students were talking in all the four corners.

No female was admitted into this back room, excepting Louison, the washer-up of cups, who crossed it from time to time to go from the wash-house to the "laboratory." Grantaire, who was perfectly tipsy, was deafening the corner he had seized upon, by shouting things, reasonable and unreasonable, in a thundering voice: —

"I am thirsty, mortals; I have dreamed that the tun of Heidelberg had a fit of apoplexy, and that

Digitized by Microsoft®

I was one of the dozen leeches applied to it. I want to drink, for I desire to forget life. Life is a hideous invention of somebody whom I am unacquainted with. It lasts no time and is worth nothing, and a man breaks his neck to live. Life is a scenery in which there are no practicables, and happiness is an old side-scene only painted on one side. Ecclesiastes says, 'All is vanity,' and I agree with the worthy gentleman, who possibly never existed. Zero, not liking to go about naked, clothed itself in vanity. Oh, vanity! the dressing up of everything in big words! A kitchen is a laboratory, a dancer a professor, a mountebank a gymnast, a boxer a pugilist, an apothecary a chemist, a barber an artist, a bricklayer an architect, a jockey a sportsman, and a woodlouse a pterygibranch. Vanity has an obverse and a reverse; the obverse is stupid, — it is the negro with his glass beads; the reverse is ridiculous, — it is the philosopher in his rags. I weep over the one and laugh at the other. What are called honors and dignities, and even honor and dignity, are generally pinchbeck. Kings make a toy of human pride. Caligula made a horse a consul, and Charles II. knighted a sirloin of beef. Drape yourselves, therefore, between the consul Incitatus and the baronet Roastbeef. As to the intrinsic value of people, it is not one bit more respectable; just listen to the panegyric which one neighbor makes of another. White upon white is ferocious. If the lily could talk, how it would run down the dove; and a bigoted woman talking of a pious woman is more venomous than the asp and the

Digitized by Microsoft®

whip-snake. It is a pity that I am an ignoramus, for I would quote a multitude of things; but I know nothing. But for all that I have always had sense; when I was a pupil of Gros, instead of daubing sketches, I spent my time in prigging apples. *Rapin* is the male of *rapine*. So much for myself; but you others are as good as I, and I laugh at your perfections, excellency, and qualities, for every quality has its defect. The saving man is akin to the miser, the generous man is very nearly related to the prodigal, and the brave man trenches on the braggart. When you call a man very pious, you mean that he is a little bigoted, and there are just as many vices in virtue as there are holes in the mantle of Diogenes. Which do you admire, the killed or the killer, Cæsar or Brutus? People generally stick up for the killer: Long live Brutus! for he was a murderer. Such is virtue; it may be virtue, but it is folly at the same time. There are some queer spots on these great men; the Brutus who killed Cæsar was in love with the statue of a boy. This statue was made by the Greek sculptor Strongylion, who also produced that figure of an Amazon called Finelegs, Euchnemys, which Nero carried about with him when travelling. This Strongylion only left two statues, which brought Brutus and Nero into harmony; Brutus was in love with one and Nero with the other. History is but one long repetition, and one century is a plagiarism of another. The battle of Marengo is a copy of the battle of Pydna; the Tolbiac of Clovis and the Austerlitz of Napoleon are as much alike as two drops of blood. I set but little value on victory.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Nothing is so stupid as conquering; the true glory is convincing. But try to prove anything; you satisfy yourself with success; what mediocrity! and with conquering; what a wretched trifle! Alas! vanity and cowardice are everywhere, and everything obeys success, even grammar. *Si volet usus,* as Horace says. Hence I despise the whole human race. Suppose we descend from universals to particulars? Would you wish me to begin admiring the peoples? What people, if you please? Is it Greece, — the Athenians? Parisians of former time killed Phocion, as you might say Coligny, and adulated tyrants to such a pitch that Anacephorus said of Pisistratus, 'His urine attracts the bees.' The most considerable man in Greece for fifty years was the grammarian Philetas, who was so short and small that he was obliged to put lead in his shoes to keep the wind from blowing him away. On the great square of Corinth there was a statue sculptured by Selamon, and catalogued by Pliny, and it represented Episthatus. What did Episthatus achieve? He invented the cross-buttock. There you have a summary of Greece and glory, and now let us pass to others. Should I admire England? Should I admire France? France, why, — on account of Paris? I have just told you my opinion of the Athenians. England, why, — on account of London? I hate Carthage, and, besides, London, the metropolis of luxury, is the headquarters of misery: in the single parish of Charing Cross one hundred persons die annually of starvation. Such is Albion, and I will add, as crowning point, that I have seen an

Digitized by Microsoft®

Englishwoman dancing in a wreath of roses and with blue spectacles. So, a groan for England. If I do not admire John Bull, ought I to admire Brother Jonathan with his peculiar institution? Take away 'Time is money,' and what remains of England? Take away 'Cotton is king,' and what remains of America? Germany is lymph and Italy bile. Shall we go into ecstasies about Russia? Voltaire admired that country, and he also admired China. I allow that Russia has its beauties, among others a powerful despotism; but I pity the despots, for they have a delicate health. An Alexis decapitated, a Peter stabbed, a Paul strangled, another Paul flattened out with boot-heels, sundry Ivans butchered, several Nicholases and Basils poisoned,—all this proves that the palace of the Emperor of Russia is in a flagrantly unhealthy condition. All the civilized nations offer to the admiration of the thinker one detail, war: now, war, civilized war, exhausts and collects all the forms of banditism, from the brigandages of the trabuceros in the gorges of Mont Jaxa down to the forays of the Comanche Indians in the Doubtful Pass. 'Stuff!' you will say to me, 'Europe is better than Asia after all.' I allow that Asia is absurd, but I do not exactly see what cause you have to laugh at the Grand Lama, you great western nations, who have blended with your fashions and elegances all the complicated filth of majesty, from the dirty chemise of Queen Isabelle down to the *chaise percée* of the Dauphin. At Brussels the most beer is consumed, at Stockholm the most brandy, at Madrid the most chocolate, at

Digitized by Microsoft®

Amsterdam the most gin, at London the most wine, at Constantinople the most coffee, and at Paris the most absinthe, — these are all useful notions. Paris, after all, bears away the bell, for in that city the very rag-pickers are sybarites: and Diogenes would as soon have been a rag-picker on the Place Maubert as a philosopher at the Piræus. Learn this fact also: the wine-shops of the rag-pickers are called 'bibines,' and the most celebrated are the *Casserole* and the *Abattoir*. Therefore O restaurants, wine-shops, music-halls, tavern-keepers, brandy and absinthe dispensers, boozing-kens of the rag-pickers, and caravansaries of caliphs, I call you to witness, I am a voluptuary. I dine at Richard's for fifty sous, and I want Persian carpets in which to roll the naked Cleopatra. Where is Cleopatra? Ah, it is you, Louison. Good-evening."

Thus poured forth Grantaire, more than drunk, as he seized the plate-washer as she passed his corner. Bossuet, stretching out his hand toward him, strove to make him be silent, but Grantaire broke out afresh: —

"Eagle of Meaux, down with your paws! You produce no effect upon me with your gesture of Hippocrates refusing the *bric-à-brac* of Artaxerxes. You need not attempt to calm me; and besides, I am melancholy. What would you have me say? Man is bad, man is a deformity; the butterfly is a success, but man a mistake. God made a failure with that animal. A crowd is a choice of uglinesses: the first comer is a scoundrel. *Femme* rhymes with *infâme*. Yes, I have the spleen, complicated with melancholy,

Digitized by Microsoft®

home-sickness, and a dash of hypochondria, and I fret, I rage, I yawn, I weary myself, I bore myself, and I find it horribly dull."

"Silence, Big R," Bossuet remarked again, who was discussing a legal point with some chums, and was sunk to his waist in a sentence of judicial slang, of which the following is the end: —

"For my part, although I am scarce an authority, and at the most an amateur lawyer, I assert this, that, according to the terms of the customs of Normandy, upon the Michaelmas day and in every year an equivalent must be paid to the lord of the manor, by all and singular, both by landowners and tenants, and that for every freehold, long lease, mortgage —"

"Echo, plaintive nymph!" Grantaire hummed. Close to Grantaire, at an almost silent table, a quire of paper, an inkstand, and a pen between two small glasses announced that a farce was being sketched out. This great affair was discussed in a low voice, and the heads of the workers almost touched.

"Let us begin with the names, for when you have the names you have the plot."

"That is true: dictate, and I will write."

"Monsieur Dorimon?"

"An annuitant?"

"Of course. His daughter Celestine."

"——tine. Who next?"

"Colonel Sainval."

"Sainval is worn out. Say Valsin."

By the side of these theatrical aspirants another group, which also took advantage of the noise to talk

Digitized by Microsoft®

low, were discussing a duel. An old student of thirty was advising a young man of eighteen, and explaining with what sort of adversary he had to deal.

"Hang it! you will have to be careful, for he is a splendid swordsman. He can attack, makes no useless feints, has a strong wrist, brilliancy, and mathematical parries. And then he is left-handed."

In the corner opposite to Grantaire, Joly and Bahorel were playing at dominos and talking of love affairs.

"You are happy," said Joly; "you have a mistress who is always laughing."

"It is a fault she commits," Bahorel answered; "a man's mistress does wrong to laugh, for it encourages him to deceive her, for seeing her gay saves you from remorse. If you see her sad you have scruples of conscience."

"Ungrateful man! a woman who laughs is so nice, and you never quarrel."

"That results from the treaty we made; on forming our little holy alliance, we gave each other a frontier which we never step beyond. Hence comes peace."

"Peace is digesting happiness."

"And you, Jolllly, how does your quarrel stand with Mamselle — you know whom I mean?"

"Oh! she still sulks with a cruel patience."

"And yet you are a lover of most touching thinness."

"Alas!"

"In your place, I would leave her."

Digitized by Microsoft®

"It's easy to say that."

"And to do. Is not her name Musichetta?"

"Yes; ah, my dear Bahorel, she is a superb girl, very literary, with little hands and feet, dresses with taste, is white and plump, and has eyes like a gypsy fortune-teller. I am wild about her."

"My dear boy, you must please her; be fashionable, and make your knees effective. Buy fine trousers of Staub."

"At how much?" cried Grantaire.

In the third corner a poetical discussion was going on, and Pagan Mythology was quarrelling with Christian Mythology. The point was Olympus, whose defence Jean Prouvaire undertook through his romantic nature. Jean Prouvaire was only timid when in repose; once excited, he broke out into a species of gayety, accentuated his enthusiasm, and he was at once laughing and lyrical.

"Let us not insult the gods," he said, "for perhaps they have not all departed, and Jupiter does not produce the effect of a dead man upon me. The gods are dreams, you say; well, even in nature such as it is at the present day, and after the flight of these dreams, we find again all the old Pagan myths. A mountain with the profile of a citadel, like the Vignemale, for instance, is still for me the head-dress of Cybele. It has not yet been proved to me that Pan does not come at night to whistle in the hollow trunks of the willows, while stopping their holes with his fingers in turn, and I have ever believed that he had some connection with the cascade of Pissevache."

Digitized by Microsoft®

In the last corner politics were being discussed, and the conceded charter was abused. Combeferre supported it feebly, while Courfeyrac attacked it energetically. There was on the table an unlucky copy of the Charte Touquet. Courfeyrac had seized it and was shaking it, mixing with his argument the rustling of this sheet of paper.

"In the first place, I do not want kings; even from the economic point of view alone I do not want them, for a king is a parasite, and there are no gratis monarchs. Listen to this, — kings are an expensive luxury. On the death of Francis I. the public debt of France was thirty thousand livres; on the death of Louis XIV. it was two milliards six hundred millions, at twenty-eight livres the marc, which in 1740 was equivalent, according to Desmarets, to four milliards five hundred millions, and at the present day would be equal to twelve milliards. In the second place, — no offence to Combeferre, — a conceded charter is a bad expedient of civilization, for saving the transaction, softening the passage, deadening the shock, making the nation pass insensibly from monarchy to democracy by the practice of constitutional fictions, — all these are detestable fictions. No, no; let us never give the people a false light, and principles pine and grow pale in your constitutional cellar. No bastardizing, no compromise, no concession, from a king to people! In all these concessions there is an Article XIV., and by the side of the hand that gives is the claw that takes back again. I distinctly refuse your charter; for a charter is a mask, and there is falsehood behind it. A people that accepts a charter

Digitized by Microsoft®

abdicates, and right is only right when entire. No charter, then, I say."

It was winter time, and two logs were crackling on the hearth; this was tempting, and Courfeyrac did not resist. He crumpled up the poor Charte Touquet and threw it in the fire; the paper blazed, and Combeferre philosophically watched the masterpiece of Louis XVIII. burning, contenting himself with saying, —

"The charter metamorphosed into flame."

And sarcasms, sallies, jests, that French thing which is called *entrain*, that English thing which is called humor, good taste and bad, sound and unsound reasoning, all the rockets of dialogue ascending together and crossing each other in all parts of the room, produced above their heads a species of merry explosion.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER V.

ENLARGEMENT OF THE HORIZON.

THE collision of young minds has this admirable thing about it, that the spark can never be foreseen or the lightning divined. What will shoot forth presently, no one knows. The burst of laughter is heard, and at the next moment seriousness makes its entrance. The impetus is given by the first word that comes, and everybody's fancy reigns. A joke suffices to open an unforeseen subject. The conversation takes a sudden turn, and the perspective changes all at once. Chance is the scene-shifter of conversations. A stern thought, which strangely issued from a clash of words, suddenly flashed through the medley in which Grantaire, Bahorel, Prouvaire, Bossuet, Combeferre, and Courfeyrac were blindly slashing and pointing. How is it that a phrase suddenly springs up in conversation, and underlines itself at once in the attention of those who trace it? As we have just said, no one knows. In the midst of the general confusion Bossuet concluded some remark he made to Combeferre with the date, "June 18, 1815, Waterloo."

At this name of Waterloo, Marius, who had been leaning over a glass of water, removed his hand from

Digitized by Microsoft®

under his chin, and began looking intently at the company.

"Pardieu!" Courfeyrac exclaimed (*Parbleu* at this period was beginning to grow out of fashion). "That number eighteen is strange, and strikes me, for it is Bonaparte's fatal number. Place Louis before and Brumaire behind, and you have the man's whole destiny, with this expressive peculiarity, that the beginning is closely pursued by the end."

Enjolras, who had hitherto been dumb, now broke the silence, and said, —

"Courfeyrac, you mean the crime by the expiation."

This word *crime* exceeded the measure which Marius, who was already greatly affected by this sudden reference to Waterloo, could accept. He rose, walked slowly to the map of France hanging on the wall, on the bottom of which could be seen an island in a separate compartment; he placed his finger on this and said, —

"Corsica, a small island which made France very great."

This was the breath of frozen air; all broke off, for they felt that something was about to begin. Bahorel, who was assuming a victorious attitude in answering Bossuet, gave it up in order to listen; and Enjolras, whose blue eye was fixed on no one and seemed to be examining space, answered without looking at Marius, —

"France requires no Corsica to be great. France is great because she is France, *quia nominor leo.*"

Marius felt no desire to give way; he turned to

Digitized by Microsoft®

Enjolras, and his voice had a strange vibration, produced by his internal emotion.

"Heaven forbid that I should diminish France; but it is not diminishing her to amalgamate Napoleon with her. Come, let us talk; I am a new-comer among you, but I confess that you astonish me. Where are we? who are we? who are you? who am I? Let us come to an understanding about the Emperor. I hear you call him Buonaparte, laying a stress on the *u*, like the Royalists, but I must tell you that my grandfather does better still, for he says, 'Buonaparté.' I fancied you young men, but where do you keep your enthusiasm, and what do you do with it? Whom do you admire, if it is not the Emperor, and what more do you want? If you will not have that great man, what great man would you have? He had everything; he was complete, and in his brain was the cube of human faculties. He made codes like Justinian, and dictated like Cæsar; his conversation blended the lightning of Pascal with the thunder of Tacitus; he made history and wrote it, and his bulletins are Iliads; he combined the figures of Newton with the metaphor of Mahomet. He left behind him in the East words great as the Pyramids; at Tilsit he taught majesty to Emperors; at the Academy of Sciences he answered Laplace; at the Council of State he held his own against Merlin; he gave a soul to the geometry of one and to the sophistry of others; he was legist with the lawyers, sidereal with the astronomers. Like Cromwell, blowing out one of two candles, he went to the Temple to bargain for a curtain tassel; he saw everything, knew everything,

Digitized by Microsoft®

but that did not prevent him from laughing heartily by the cradle of his new-born son. And all at once startled Europe listened, armies set out, parks of artillery rolled along, bridges of boats were thrown over rivers, clouds of cavalry galloped in the hurricane, and shouts, bugles, and the crashing of thrones could be heard all around! The frontiers of kingdoms oscillated on the map, the sound of a superhuman sword being drawn from its scabbard could be heard, and he was seen, standing erect on the horizon, with a gleam in his hand, and a splendor in his eyes, opening in the thunder his two wings, the grand army and the old Guard. He was the archangel of war!"

All were silent, and Enjolras hung his head. Silence always produces to some extent the effect of acquiescence, or a species of setting the back against the wall. Marius, almost without drawing breath, continued with increased enthusiasm, —

"Let us be just, my friends! What a splendid destiny it is for a people to be the empire of such an Emperor, when that people is France and adds its genius to the genius of that man! To appear and reign; to march and triumph; to have as bivouacs every capital; to select grenadiers and make kings of them; to decree the downfall of dynasties; to transfigure Europe at double-quick step; to feel when you threaten that you lay your hand on the sword-hilt of God; to follow in one man Hannibal, Cæsar, and Charlemagne; to be the people of a ruler who accompanies your every daybreak with the brilliant announcement of a battle gained; to be aroused in the

Digitized by Microsoft®

morning by the guns of the Invalides; to cast into the abysses of light prodigious words which are eternally luminous, — Marengo, Arcola, Austerlitz, Jena, and Wagram! to produce at each moment on the zenith of centuries constellations of victories; to make the French Empire a counterpart of the Roman Empire; to be the great nation, and give birth to the great army; to send legions all over the world, as the mountain sends its eagles in all directions to conquer, rule, and crush; to be in Europe a people gilded by glory; to sound a Titanic flourish of trumpets through history; to conquer the world twice, by conquest and by amazement, — all this is sublime, and what is there greater?"

"To be free!" said Combeferre.

Marius in his turn hung his head. This simple and cold remark had traversed his epical effusion like a steel blade, and he felt it fainting away within him. When he raised his eyes, Combeferre was no longer present; probably satisfied with his reply to the apotheosis, he had left the room, and all excepting Enjolras had followed him. Enjolras, alone with Marius, was looking at him gravely. Marius, however, having slightly collected his ideas, did not confess himself defeated, and he was in all probability about to begin afresh upon Enjolras, when he suddenly heard some one singing on the staircase. It was Combeferre, and this is what he sung: —

"Si César m'avait donné
La gloire et la guerre,
Et qu'il me fallût quitter
L'amour de ma mère,

Digitized by Microsoft®

Je dirais au grand César :
Reprends ton sceptre et ton char,
J'aime mieux ma mère, ô gué !
J'aime mieux ma mère ! "

The tender and solemn accent with which Combeferre sang this verse imparted to it a species of strange grandeur. Marius, with his eye pensively fixed on the ceiling, repeated almost mechanically, "My mother!"

At this moment he felt Enjolras' hand on his shoulder.

"Citizen," he said to him, "my mother is the Republic."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VI.

RES ANGUSTA.

THIS evening left a sad obscurity and a profound shock in the mind of Marius, and he felt what the earth probably feels when it is opened by the ploughshare that the grain may be deposited; it only feels the wound, and the joy of giving birth does not arrive till later.

Marius was gloomy; he had only just made himself a faith, and must he reject it again? He declared to himself that he would not: he resolved not to doubt, and began doubting involuntarily. To stand between two religions, one of which you have not yet lost, and the other which you have not yet entered, is unendurable, and twilight only pleases bat-like souls. Marius had an open eyeball and wanted true light; and the semi-lustre of doubt hurt him. Whatever might be his desire to remain where he was and cling to it, he was invincibly constrained to continue, to advance, to think, to go farther. Whither would this lead him? He feared lest, after taking so many steps which had drawn him near his father, he was now going to take steps which would carry him away from him. His discomfort increased with all the reflections that occurred to him, and an

Digitized by Microsoft®

escarpment became formed around him. He agreed neither with his grandfather nor his friends; he was rash for the one and backward for the others; and he found himself doubly isolated, — on the side of old age and on the side of youth. He left off going to the Café Musain.

In the troubled state of his conscience he did not think at all of certain serious sides of existence; but the realities of life will not allow themselves to be forgotten, and so they suddenly came to jog his memory. One morning the landlord came into Marius's room, and said to him, —

"Monsieur Courfeyrac recommended you?"

"Yes."

"But I want my money."

"Ask Courfeyrac to come and speak to me," said Marius.

When Courfeyrac arrived the landlord left them, and Marius told his friend what he had not dreamed of telling him yet, — that he was, so to speak, alone in the world, and had no relations.

"What will become of you?" said Courfeyrac.

"I do not know," Marius answered.

"What do you intend doing?"

"I do not know."

"Have you any money?"

"Fifteen francs."

"Are you willing to borrow from me?"

"Never."

"Have you clothes?"

"There they are."

"Any jewelry?"

Digitized by Microsoft®

"A gold watch."

"I know a second-hand clothesman who will take your overcoat and a pair of trousers."

"Very good."

"You will only have a pair of trousers, a waistcoat, a hat, and coat left."

"And my boots."

"What? You will not go barefoot? What opulence!"

"That will be enough."

"I know a jeweller who will buy your watch."

"All right."

"No, it is not all right; what will you do after?"

"Anything I can that is honest."

"Do you know English?"

"No."

"Or German?"

"No."

"All the worse."

"Why so?"

"Because a friend of mine, a publisher, is preparing a sort of Encyclopædia, for which you could have translated English or German articles. The pay is bad, but it is possible to live on it."

"I will learn English and German."

"And in the mean while?"

"I will eat my clothes and my watch."

"The clothes-dealer was sent for, and gave twenty francs for the coat and trousers; next they went to the jeweller's, who bought the watch for forty-five francs.

"That's not so bad," said Marius to Courfeyrac,

Digitized by Microsoft®

on returning to the hotel; "with my fifteen francs that makes eighty."

"And your bill here?" Courfeyrac observed.

"Oh, I forgot that," said Marius.

The landlord presented his bill, which Marius was bound to pay at once; it amounted to seventy francs.

"I have ten francs left," said Marius.

"The deuce!" Courfeyrac replied; "you will spend five francs while learning English, and five while learning German. That will be swallowing a language very quickly, or a five-franc piece very slowly."

In the mean time Aunt Gillenormand, who was a good soul in the main upon sad occasions, discovered her nephew's abode, and one morning, when Marius returned from college, he found a letter from his aunt and the "sixty pistoles," that is to say, six hundred francs in gold, in a sealed-up box. Marius sent the thirty louis back to his aunt with a respectful note, in which he stated that he would be able in future to take care of himself — at that moment he had just three francs left. The aunt did not tell grandpapa of this refusal, through fear of raising his exasperation to the highest pitch; besides, had he not said, "Never mention that blood-drinker's name in my presence"? Marius quitted the Hôtel of the Porte St. Jacques, as he did not wish to run into debt.

Digitized by Microsoft®

BOOK V.

THE GOOD OF MISFORTUNE.

CHAPTER I.

MARIUS IS INDIGENT.

LIFE became severe for Marius: eating his clothes and his watch was nothing, but he also went through that indescribable course which is called "roughing it." This is a horrible thing, which contains days without bread, nights without sleep, evenings without candle, a house without fire, weeks without work, a future without hope, a threadbare coat, an old hat at which the girls laugh, the door which you find locked at night because you have not paid your rent, the insolence of the porter and the eating-house keeper, the grins of neighbors, humiliations, dignity trampled under foot, any sort of work accepted, disgust, bitterness, and desperation. Marius learned how all this is devoured, and how it is often the only thing which a man has to eat. At that moment of life when a man requires pride because he requires love, he felt himself derided because he was meanly dressed, and ridiculous because he was poor. At the age when youth swells the heart with an

Digitized by Microsoft®

imperial pride, he looked down more than once at his worn-out boots, and knew the unjust shame and burning blushes of wretchedness. It is an admirable and terrible trial, from which the weak come forth infamous and the strong sublime. It is the crucible into which destiny throws a man whenever it wishes to have a scoundrel or a demigod.

For man's great actions are performed in minor struggles. There are obstinate and unknown braves who defend themselves inch by inch in the shadows against the fatal invasion of want and turpitude. They are noble and mysterious triumphs which no eye sees, no renown rewards, and no flourish of trumpets salutes. Life, misfortune, isolation, abandonment, and poverty are battle-fields which have their heroes, — obscure heroes who are at times greater than illustrious heroes. Firm and exceptional natures are thus created: misery, which is nearly always a step-mother, is at times a mother: want brings forth the power of soul and mind: distress is the nurse of pride, and misfortune is an excellent milk for the magnanimous.

There was a time in Marius's life when he swept his own landing, when he bought a halfpenny-worth of Brie cheese of the fruiterer, when he waited till nightfall to go into the baker's and buy a loaf, which he carried stealthily to his garret as if he had stolen it. At times there might have been seen slipping into the butcher's shop at the corner, among the gossiping cooks who elbowed him, a young awkward man with books under his arm, who had a timid and impetuous air, who on entering removed his hat from

Digitized by Microsoft®

his dripping forehead, made a deep bow to the astonished butcher's wife, another to the foreman, asked for a mutton-chop, paid three or four pence, wrapped the chop in paper, placed it between two books under his arm, and went away. It was Marius; and on this chop, which he cooked himself, he lived for three days. On the first day he ate the lean, on the second he ate the fat, and on the third he gnawed the bone. Several times did Aunt Gillenormand make tentatives and send him the sixty pistoles, but Marius always returned them, saying that he wanted for nothing.

He was still in mourning for his father when the revolution we have described took place within him, and since then he had not left off black clothes, but the clothes left him. A day arrived when he had no coat, though his trousers would still pass muster. What was he to do? Courfeyrac, to whom he on his side rendered several services, gave him an old coat. For thirty sous Marius had it turned by some porter, and it became a new coat. But it was green, and Marius henceforth did not go out till nightfall, which caused his coat to appear black. As he still wished to be in mourning, he wrapped himself in the night.

Through all this he contrived to pass his examination. He was supposed to inhabit Courfeyrac's rooms, which were decent, and where a certain number of legal tomes, supported by broken-backed volumes of novels, represented the library prescribed by the regulations. He had his letters addressed to Courfeyrac's lodgings. When Marius was called to

Digitized by Microsoft®

the bar, he informed his grandfather of the fact in a cold letter, which, however, was full of submission and respect. M. Gillenormand took the letter with a trembling hand, read it, tore it in four parts, and threw them into the basket. Two or three days later Mlle. Gillenormand heard her father, who was alone in his room, talking aloud, which always happened when he was agitated. She listened and heard the old gentleman say, "If you were not an ass, you would know that you cannot be at the same time a Baron and a lawyer."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER II.

MARIUS POOR.

It is the same with misery as with everything else, — in the end it becomes possible, it assumes a shape. A man vegetates, that is to say, is developed in a certain poor way, which is, however, sufficient for life. This is the sort of existence which Marius Pontmercy had secured.

He had got out of the narrowest part, and the defile had grown slightly wider before him. By labor, courage, perseverance, and his will, he contrived to earn about seven hundred francs a year by his work. He had taught himself English and German, and, thanks to Courfeyrac, who introduced him to his friend the publisher, he filled the modest post of hack in his office. He wrote prospectuses, translated newspapers, annotated editions, compiled biographies, and one year with another his net receipts were seven hundred francs. He lived upon them, — how? Not badly, as we shall show.

Marius occupied at No. 50–52, for the annual rent of thirty francs, a garret without a fire-place, which was called a "cabinet," and only contained the indispensable articles of furniture, and this furniture was his own. He paid three francs a month

Digitized by Microsoft®

to the old principal lodger for sweeping out his room, and bringing him every morning a little hot water, a new-laid egg, and a sou roll. On this roll and egg he breakfasted, and the outlay varied from two to four sous, according as eggs were dear or cheap. At six in the evening he went to the Rue St. Jacques to dine at Rousseau's, exactly opposite Basset's, the print-shop at the corner of the Rue des Mathurins. He did not eat soup, but he ordered a plate of meat for six sous, half a plate of vegetables for three sous, and dessert three sous. For three sous he had as much bread as he liked, and for wine he drank water. On paying at the bar, where Madame Rousseau, at that period a fat and good-looking dame, was majestically enthroned, he gave a sou for the waiter and Madame Rousseau gave him a smile. Then he went away; for sixteen sous he had a smile and a dinner. This Rousseau restaurant, where so few bottles and so many water-jugs were emptied, was rather a sedative than a restorer. It no longer exists, but the master used to have a wonderful nickname, — he was called Rousseau the aquatic.

Thus, with breakfast four sous, dinner sixteen, his food cost him three hundred and sixty-five francs a year. Add thirty francs for rent and the thirty-six francs for the old woman, and a few minor expenses, and for four hundred and fifty francs Marius was boarded, lodged, and served. His clothes cost him a hundred francs, his linen fifty, his washing fifty, but the whole did not exceed six hundred and fifty francs. He had fifty left, and was rich: at times he

Digitized by Microsoft®

would lend ten francs to a friend, and Courfeyrac once actually borrowed sixty francs of him. As for heating, as Marius had no chimney, he "simplified" it. Marius always had two complete suits; one old, for every-day wear, and the other new, for occasions, and both were black. He had but three shirts, — one on, one in the drawer, and one at the wash, — and he renewed them as they became worn out. As they were usually torn, he had a fashion of buttoning up his coat to the chin.

It had taken Marius years to reach this flourishing condition, — rude and difficult years, in which he underwent great struggles; but he had not failed to himself a single day. As regarded want, he had suffered everything and he had done everything except run into debt. He gave himself the credit of never having owed a farthing to any one, for to him debt was the beginning of slavery. He said to himself that a creditor is worse than a master; for a master only holds your person, while a creditor holds your dignity and may insult it. Sooner than borrow he did not eat, and he had known many days of fasting. Knowing that unless a man is careful, reduction of fortune may lead to baseness of soul, he jealously watched over his pride: many a remark or action which, under other circumstances, he would have regarded as deference, now seemed to him platitudes, and he refrained from them. He ventured nothing, as he did not wish to fall back; he had on his face a stern blush, and he was timid almost to rudeness. In all his trials he felt encouraged, and to some extent supported, by a secret force within

Digitized by Microsoft®

him; for the soul helps the body and at times raises it, and is the only bird that upholds its cage.

By the side of his father's name, another name was engraved on Marius's heart, that of Thénardier. Marius, in his grave and enthusiastic nature, enveloped in a species of glory the man to whom he owed his father's life, that intrepid sergeant who saved his colonel among the balls and bullets of Waterloo. He never separated the memory of this man from that of his father, and he associated them in his veneration: it was a species of shrine with two steps, — the high altar for the Colonel, the low one for Thénardier. What doubled the tenderness of his gratitude was the thought of the misfortune into which he knew that Thénardier had fallen and was swallowed up. Marius had learned at Montfermeil the ruin and bankruptcy of the unfortunate landlord, and since then had made extraordinary efforts to find his trail, and try to reach him in the frightful abyss of misery through which Thénardier had disappeared. Marius went everywhere: he visited Chelles, Bondy, Gournay Nogent, and Lagny; and obstinately continued his search for three years, spending in these explorations the little money he saved. No one was able to give him the slightest information of Thénardier, and it was supposed he had gone to a foreign country. His creditors had sought him too, with less love, but quite as much perseverance, as Marius, and had been unable to lay hands on him. Marius accused and felt angry with himself for not succeeding in his search; it was the only debt the Colonel left him, and he felt bound in

Digitized by Microsoft®

honor to pay it. "What!" he thought, "when my father lay dying on the battle-field, Thénardier contrived to find him in the midst of the smoke and grape-shot, and carried him off on his shoulders, although he owed him nothing; while I, who owe so much to Thénardier, am unable to come up with him in the shadow where he is dying of want, and in my turn bring him back from death to life. Oh, I will find him!" In fact, Marius would have given one of his arms to find Thénardier, and his last drop of blood to save him from want; and his sweetest and most magnificent dream was to see Thénardier, do him some service, and say to him, — "You do not know me, but I know you: I am here, dispose of me as you please."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER III.

MARIUS GROWS.

At this period Marius was twenty years of age, and he had left his grandfather's house for three. They remained on the same terms, without attempting a reconciliation or trying to meet. What good would it have been to meet, — to come into collision again? Which of them would have got the better? Marius was the bronze vessel, but Father Gillenormand was the iron pot.

We are bound to say that Marius was mistaken as to his grandfather's heart; he imagined that M. Gillenormand had never loved him, and that this sharp, harsh, laughing old gentleman, who cursed, shouted, stormed, and raised his cane, only felt for him at the most that light and severe affection of the Gerontes in the play. Marius was mistaken; there are fathers who do not love their children; but there is not a grandfather who does not adore his grandson. In his heart, as we said, M. Gillenormand idolized Marius: he idolized him, it is true, after his fashion, with an accompaniment of abuse and even of blows, but when the lad had disappeared he felt a black gap in his heart; he insisted upon his name not being mentioned, but regretted that he was so

Digitized by Microsoft®

strictly obeyed. At the outset he hoped that this Buonapartist, this Jacobin, this terrorist, this Septembrist would return; but weeks passed, months passed, years passed, and, to the great despair of M. Gillenormand, the blood-drinker did not reappear. "I could not do otherwise, though, than turn him out," the grandfather said; and asked himself, "If it were to be done again, would I do it?" His pride at once answered Yes; but his old head, which he silently shook, sorrowfully answered, No. He had his hours of depression, for he missed Marius, and old men require affection as much as they do the sun to warm them. However strong he might naturally be, the absence of Marius had changed something in him; for no consideration in the world would he have taken a step towards the "little scamp," but he suffered. He lived in greater retirement than ever at the Marais; he was still gay and violent as of yore, but his gayety had a convulsive harshness, as if it contained grief and passion, and his violence generally terminated with a sort of gentle and sombre depression. He would say to himself at times, — "Oh, if he were to come back, what a hearty box of the ears I would give him!"

As for the aunt, she thought too little to love much; to her Marius was only a black and vague profile, and in the end she paid much less attention to him than to the cat or the parrot which it is probable she possessed. What added to Father Gillenormand's secret suffering was that he shut it up within himself, and did not allow it to be divined. His chagrin was like one of those newly-invented

Digitized by Microsoft®

furnaces which consume their own smoke. At times it happened that officious friends would speak to him about Marius, and ask, "How is your grandson, and what is he doing?" The old bourgeois would answer, with a sigh if he were sad, or with a flip to his frill if he wished to appear gay, "Monsieur le Baron Pontmercy practises law in some corner."

While the old gentleman regretted, Marius applauded himself. As is the case with all good hearts, misfortune had freed him from bitterness; he thought of M. Gillenormand gently, but he was resolved never to accept anything from a man *who had been unjust to his father*. This was the mitigated translation of his first indignation. Moreover, he was glad that he had suffered, and was still suffering, for he did so for his father. The hardness of his life satisfied and pleased him, and he said to himself with a sort of joy that *it was the least he* could do, and that it was an expiation; that, were it not so, he would have been punished more hereafter for his impious indifference toward his father, and such a father, — that it would not have been just for his father to have all the suffering and he none; and, besides, what were his toil and want when compared with the Colonel's heroic life? Lastly, that his only way of approaching his father, and resembling him, was to be valiant against indigence, as he had been brave against the enemy, and that this was doubtless what the Colonel meant by the words, *He will be worthy of it*, — words which Marius continued to bear, not on his chest, as the Colonel's letter had disappeared, but in his heart.

Digitized by Microsoft®

And then, again, on the day when his grandfather turned him out he was only a boy, while now he was a man and felt he was so. Misery — we lay a stress on the fact — had been kind to him; for poverty in youth, when it succeeds, has the magnificent result of turning the whole will to effort and the whole soul to aspiration. Poverty at once lays bare material life and renders it hideous; and hence come indescribable soarings toward the ideal life. The rich young man has a thousand brilliant and coarse amusements, — races, shooting, dogs, tobacco, gambling, good dinners, and so on, which are occupations of the lower part of the mind at the expense of the higher and more delicate part. The poor young man has to work for his bread, and when he has eaten, he has only reverie left him. He goes to the free spectacles which God gives; he looks at the sky, space, the stars, the flowers, the children, the humanity in which he is suffering, and the creation in which he radiates. He looks so much at humanity that he sees the soul, and so much at creation that he sees God. He dreams, and feels himself great; he dreams again, and feels himself tender. From the egotism of the man who suffers, he passes to the compassion of the man who contemplates, and an admirable feeling is aroused in him, — forgetfulness of self and pity for all. On thinking of the numberless enjoyments which nature offers, gives, and lavishes on open minds, and refuses to closed minds, he, the millionnaire of intellect, learns to pity the millionnaire of money. Hatred departs from his heart in proportion as brightness enters his mind. Moreover, was he

Digitized by Microsoft®

unhappy? No, for the wretchedness of a young man is never wretched. Take the first lad who passes, however poor he may be, with his health, his strength, his quick step, his sparkling eyes, his blood circulating warmly, his black hair, his ruddy cheeks, his coral lips, his white teeth, and his pure breath, and he will ever be an object of envy to an old Emperor. And then, each morning he goes to earn his livelihood, and while his hands earn bread, his spine gains pride, and his brain ideas. When his work is ended, he returns to ineffable ecstasy, to contemplation, and joy; he lives with his feet in affliction, in obstacles, on the pavement, in the brambles, or at times in the mud, but his head is in the light. He is firm, serene, gentle, peaceful, attentive, serious, satisfied with a little, and benevolent; and he blesses God for having given him two riches which rich men often want, — labor which makes him free, and thought that renders him worthy.

This is what went on in Marius, and, truth to tell, he inclined almost too much to the side of contemplation. From the day when he felt tolerably certain of a livelihood, he stopped there, thinking it good to be poor, and taking from labor hours which he gave to thought. That is to say, he spent entire days now and then in dreaming, plunged like a visionary into the silent delights of ecstasy. He had thus arranged the problem of his life; to toil as little as possible at the material task in order to work as much as possible on the impalpable task, — in other words, to devote a few hours to real life, and throw the rest into infinity. He did not perceive, as he

Digitized by Microsoft®

fancied that he wanted for nothing, that contemplation, thus understood, ended by becoming one of the forms of indolence; that he had contented himself with subduing the absolute necessities of life, and that he was resting too soon.

It was evident that for such a generous and energetic nature as his, this could only be a transitional state, and that at the first collision with the inevitable complications of destiny Marius would wake up. In the mean while, though, he was called a barrister, and whatever Father Gillenormand might think, he did not practise. Reverie had turned him away from pleading. It was a bore to flatter attorneys, attend regularly at the palace and seek for briefs. And why should he do so? He saw no reason to change his means of existence; his obscure task was certain, he had but little labor over it, and, as we have explained, he considered his income satisfactory. One of the publishers for whom he worked, M. Magimel, I think, offered to take him into his house, lodge him comfortably, find him regular work, and pay him one thousand five hundred francs a year. To be comfortably lodged and have one thousand five hundred francs a year! doubtless agreeable things, but then, to resign his liberty, to be a hired servant, a sort of literary clerk! In the opinion of Marius, if he accepted, his position would become better and worse; he would gain comfort and lose dignity; he would exchange a complete and fine misfortune for an ugly and ridiculous constraint; it would be something like a blind man who became one-eyed. So he declined the offer.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Marius lived in solitude; through the inclination he had to remain outside everything, and also through the commotion he had undergone, he held aloof from the society presided over by Enjolras. They remained excellent friends, and ready to help each other when the opportunity offered, but nothing more. Marius had two friends, one, young Courfeyrac, the other, old M. Mabœuf, and he inclined to the latter. In the first place, he owed to him the revolution which had taken place in him, and his knowledge and love of his father. "He operated on me for the cataract," he would say. Certainly, this churchwarden had been decisive: but for all that, M. Mabœuf had only been in this affair the calm and impassive agent of Providence. He had enlightened Marius accidentally and unconsciously, just as a candle does which some one brings into a room; but he had been the candle, and not the some one. As for the internal political revolution which had taken place in Marius, M. Mabœuf was entirely incapable of understanding, wishing, or directing it. As we shall meet M. Mabœuf again hereafter, a few remarks about him will not be thrown away.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER IV.

M. MABŒUF.

On the day when M. Mabœuf said to Marius, "I certainly approve of political opinions," he expressed the real state of his mind. All political opinions were a matter of indifference to him, and he approved of them all without distinction, that they might leave him at peace, just as the Greeks called the Furies — "the lovely, the kind, the exquisite" — the Eumenides. M. Mabœuf's political opinion was to love plants passionately and books even more. He possessed, like everybody else, his termination in *ist*, without which no one could have lived at that day; but he was neither Royalist, Bonapartist, Chartist, Orleanist, nor Anarchist, — he was a botanist.

He did not understand how men could come to hate each other for trifles like the charter, democracy, legitimacy, monarchy, the republic, etc., when there were in the world all sorts of mosses, grasses, and plants which they could look at, and piles of folios, and even 32mos, whose pages they could turn over. He was very careful not to be useless: his having books did not prevent him reading them, and being a botanist did not prevent him being a gardener. When he knew Colonel Pontmercy, there was this sympathy

Digitized by Microsoft®

between them, that the Colonel did for flowers what he did for fruits. M. Mabœuf had succeeded in producing pears as sweet as those of St. Germain; it is one of those combinations from which sprang, as it seems, the autumn Mirabelle plum, which is still celebrated, and no less perfumed than the summer one. He attended Mass more through gentleness than devotion, and because, while he loved men's faces but hated their noise, he found them at church congregated and silent; and feeling that he must hold some position in the State, he selected that of churchwarden. He had never succeeded in loving any woman so much as a tulip bulb, or any man so much as an Elzevir. He had long passed his sixtieth year, when some one asked him one day, "How is it that you never married?" "I forgot it," he said. When he happened to say, — and to whom does it not happen? — "Oh, if I were rich!" it was not when ogling a pretty girl, like Father Gillenormand, but when contemplating a quarto. He lived alone with an old housekeeper; he was rather gouty, and when he slept, his old chalk-stoned fingers formed an arch in the folds of the sheets. He had written and published a "Flora of the Environs of Cauteretz," with colored plates, —a work of some merit, of which he possessed the plates, and sold it himself. People rang at his door in the Rue Mézières two or three times a day to buy a copy; he made a profit of about two thousand francs a year by the book, and that was nearly his whole fortune. Although poor, he had contrived by patience and privations, and with time, to form a valuable collection of all sorts of rare

Digitized by Microsoft ®

examples. He never went out without a book under his arm, and frequently returned with two. The sole ornaments of his four rooms on the ground-floor, which, with a small garden, formed his lodging, were herbals and engravings by old masters. The sight of a musket or a sabre froze him, and in his life he had never walked up to a cannon, not even at the Invalides. He had a tolerable stomach, a brother a curé, very white hair, no teeth left in his mouth or in his mind, a tremor all over him, a Picard accent, a childish laugh, and the air of an old sheep. With all he had no other friend among the living than an old bookseller at the Porte St. Jacques of the name of Royol; and the dream of his life was to naturalize indigo in France.

His maid-servant was also a variety of innocence. The good woman was an old maid, and Sultan, her tom-cat, who might have meowed the Allegri Miserere in the Sistine Chapel, filled her heart, and sufficed for the amount of passion within her. Not one of her dreams had ever gone so far as a man, and had not got beyond her cat; like him, she had moustaches. Her glory was perfectly white caps, and she spent her time on Sunday, after Mass, in counting the linen in her box, and spreading on her bed the gowns which she bought in the piece, and never had made up. She knew how to read, and M. Mabœuf had christened her Mother Plutarch.

M. Mabœuf had taken a fancy to Marius, because the young man, being young and gentle, warmed his old age without startling his timidity. Youth, combined with gentleness, produces on aged people the

Digitized by Microsoft®

effect of sun without wind. When Marius was saturated with military glory, gunpowder, marches and counter-marches, and all the prodigious battles in which his father gave and received such mighty sabre-cuts, he went to see M. Mabœuf, who talked to him about the hero in his connection with flowers.

About the year 1830 his brother the curé died, and almost immediately after, as when night arrives, the entire horizon became dark for M. Mabœuf. The bankruptcy of a notary despoiled him of ten thousand francs, all he possessed of his brother's capital and his own, while the revolution of July produced a crisis in the book trade. In times of pressure the first thing which does not sell is a *Flora*, and that of the Environs of Cauteretz stopped dead. Weeks passed without a purchaser. At times M. Mabœuf started at the sound of the house bell, but Mother Plutarch would say to him sadly, "It is the water-carrier, sir." In a word, M. Mabœuf left the Rue Mézières one day, abdicated his office as church-warden, gave up St. Sulpice, sold a portion, not of his books, but of his engravings, for which he cared least, and installed himself in a small house on the Boulevard Montparnasse, where, however, he only remained three months, for two reasons, — in the first place, the ground-floor and garden cost three hundred francs, and he did not dare set aside more than two hundred francs for rent; and secondly, as he was close to the Fatou shooting-gallery, he heard pistol-shots, which he could not endure. He carried off his *Flora*, his copper-plates, his herbals, port-folios, and books and settled down near the Salpêtrière, in

Digitized by Microsoft®

a sort of hut, in the village of Austerlitz, where he rented for fifty crowns a year three rooms, a garden enclosed by a hedge, and a well. He took advantage of this removal to sell nearly all his furniture. On the day when he entered his new house he was in very good spirits, and drove in with his own hands the nails on which to hang the engravings; he dug in his garden for the rest of the day, and at night, seeing that Mother Plutarch had an anxious look and was thoughtful, he tapped her on the shoulder and said with a smile, "We have the indigo!" Only two visitors, the publisher and Marius, were allowed admission to his hut of Austerlitz, — a rackety name, by the way, which was most disagreeable to him.

As we have remarked, things of this world permeate very slowly brains absorbed in wisdom, or mania, or, as often happens, in both at once, and their own destiny is remote from them. The result of such concentrations is a passiveness which, were it of a reasoning nature, would resemble philosophy. Men decline, sink, glide out, and even collapse, without exactly noticing, though this always ends with a reawaking, but one of a tardy character. In the mean while it appears as if they are neutral in the game which is being played between their happiness and misery; they are the stakes, and look on at the game with indifference. It was thus that M. Mabœuf remained rather childishly but most profoundly serene, in the obscurity that was enveloping him gradually, and while his hopes were being extinguished in turn. The habits of his mind had the regular movement of a clock, and when he was

Digitized by Microsoft®

once wound up by an illusion he went for a very long time, even when the illusion had disappeared. A clock does not stop at the precise moment when the key is lost.

M. Mabœuf had innocent pleasures, which cost but little and were unexpected, and the slightest accident supplied him with them. One day Mother Plutarch was reading a novel in the corner of the room; she was reading aloud, for she fancied that she understood better in that way. There are some persons who read very loud, and look as if they were pledging themselves their word of honor about what they are reading. Mother Plutarch read her novel with an energy of this nature, and M. Mabœuf listened to her without hearing. While reading, Mother Plutarch came to the following passage, relating to a bold dragoon and a gushing young lady: —

"La belle bouda, et Le Dragon — "

Here she broke off to wipe her spectacles.

"Bouddha and the dragon," M. Mabœuf repeated in a low voice; "yes, that is true; there was a dragon, which lived in a cavern, belched flames, and set fire to the sky. Several stars had already been burned up by this monster, which had tiger-claws, by the bye, when Bouddha went into its den and succeeded in converting the dragon. That is an excellent book you are reading, Mother Plutarch, and there cannot be a finer legend."

And M. Mabœuf fell into a delicious reverie.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER V.

POVERTY A GOOD NEIGHBOR TO MISERY.

MARIUS felt a liking for this candid old man, who saw himself slowly assailed by poverty and yet was not depressed by it. Marius met Courfeyrac and sought M. Mabœuf — very rarely, however — once or twice a month at the most. Marius's delight was to take long walks alone, either on the external boulevards at the Champ de Mars, or in the least frequented walks of the Luxembourg. He often spent half a day in looking at a kitchen-garden, the patches of lettuce, the fowls on the dungheap, and the horse turning the wheel of the chain-pump. Passers-by looked at him with surprise, and some thought his dress suspicious and his face dangerous, while it was only a poor young man thinking without an object. It was in one of these walks that he discovered the Maison Gorbeau, and the isolation and the cheapness tempting him, he took a room there. He was only known by the name of M. Marius.

Some of his father's old generals and old comrades invited him to come and see them, when they knew him, and Marius did not refuse, for there were opportunities to speak about his father. He called thus from time to time upon Count Pajol, General Bella-

Digitized by Microsoft®

vesne, and General Fririon at the Invalides. There was generally music and dancing, and on such evenings Marius put on his best suit; but he never went to such parties except on days when it was freezing tremendously hard, for he could not pay for a vehicle, and he would not go unless his boots were like looking-glasses. He would say at times, though not at all bitterly, "Men are so constituted that in a drawing-room you may have mud everywhere except on your boots. In order to give you a proper reception only one irreproachable thing is expected from you — is it your conscience? No, your boots."

All passions, saving those of the heart, are dissipated in reverie. The political fever of Marius had vanished, and the revolution of 1830 had aided in this, by satisfying and calming him. He had remained the same, except in his passion; he still held the same opinions, but they were softened down. Properly speaking, he no longer had opinions, but sympathies. To what party did he belong? To that of humanity. For humanity he selected France; in the nation he chose the people; and in the people, woman, and his pity was mainly given to her. At the present time he preferred an idea to a fact, a poet to a hero, and he admired a book like Job even more than an event like Marengo; and when after a day of meditation he returned along the boulevard and saw through the trees the illimitable space, the nameless gleams, the abyss, shadow, and mystery, all that was only human seemed to him infinitely little. He believed that he had — and probably he had — reached the truth of life and of human philosophy;

Digitized by Microsoft®

and ended by gazing at nothing but the sky, the only thing which truth can see from the bottom of her well.

This did not prevent him from multiplying plans, combinations, scaffolding, and projects for the future. In this state of reverie, any eye which had seen into Marius's interior would have been dazzled by the purity of his mind. In fact, if our eyes of the flesh were allowed to peer into the consciences of our neighbor, a man could be judged far more surely from what he dreams than from what he thinks. There is a volition in thought, but there is none in a dream, and the latter, which is entirely spontaneous, assumes and retains, even in the gigantic and the ideal, the image of our mind. Nothing issues more directly and more sincerely from the bottom of our soul than our unreflecting and disproportioned aspirations for the splendors of destiny. The true character of every man could be found in these aspirations far more certainly than in arranged, reasoned, and co-ordinated ideas. Our chimeras are the things which most resemble ourselves, and each man dreams of the unknown and the impossible according to his nature.

About the middle of the year 1831 the old woman who waited on Marius told him that his neighbors, the wretched Jondrette family, were going to be turned out. Marius, who spent nearly his whole time out of doors, scarce knew that he had neighbors.

"Why are they turned out?" he asked.

"Because they do not pay their rent, and owe two quarters."

Digitized by Microsoft®

"How much is it?"

"Twenty francs," said the old woman.

Marius had thirty francs in reserve in a drawer.

"Here are twenty-five francs," he said to the woman; "pay the rent of the poor people, give them five francs, and do not tell them where the money comes from."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VI.

THE SUBSTITUTE.

Accident decreed that the regiment to which Théodule belonged should be quartered in Paris. This was an opportunity for Aunt Gillenormand to have a second idea; her first one had been to set Théodule watching Marius, and she now plotted to make him succeed him. In the event of the grandfather feeling a vague want for a youthful face in the house — for such rays of dawn are sometimes sweet to ruins — it was expedient to find another Marius. "Well," she thought, "it is only a simple erratum, such as I notice in books, for *Marius* read *Théodule.* A grand-nephew is much the same as a grandson, after all, and in default of a barrister you can take a lancer."

One morning when M. Gillenormand was going to read something like the *Quotidienne,* his daughter came in and said in her softest voice, for the interests of her favorite were at stake, —

"Papa, Théodule is coming this morning to pay his respects to you."

"Who 's Théodule?"

"Your grand-nephew."

"Ah!" said the old gentleman.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Then he began reading, thought no more of the grand-nephew, who was only some Théodule, and soon became angry, which nearly always happened when he read. The paper he held, a Royalist one we need hardly say, announced for the morrow, without any amenity, one of the daily events of Paris at the time, that the pupils of the schools of law and medicine would assemble in the Place du Panthéon — to deliberate. The affair was one of the questions of the moment, the artillery of the National Guard, and a conflict between the war minister and the "Citizen Militia," on the subject of guns parked in the court-yard of the Louvre. The students were going to "deliberate" on this, and it did not require much more to render M. Gillenormand furious. He thought of Marius, who was a student, and who would probably go, like the others, "to deliberate at mid-day in the Place du Panthéon."

While he was making these painful reflections Lieutenant Théodule came in, dressed in mufti, which was clever, and was discreetly introduced by Mlle. Gillenormand. The lancer had reasoned thus: "The old Druid has not sunk all his money in annuities, and so it is worth the while to disguise one's self as a *pékin* now and then." Mlle. Gillenormand said aloud to her father, —

"Théodule, your grand-nephew."

And in a whisper to the Lieutenant, — "Assent to everything."

And she retired.

The Lieutenant, but little accustomed to such venerable meetings, stammered, with some timidity,

Digitized by Microsoft®

"Good-morning, uncle," and made a bow which was composed of the involuntary and mechanical military salute blended with a bourgeois greeting.

"Ah, it 's you, very good, sit down," said the ancestor, and after saying this he utterly forgot the lancer. Théodule sat down, and M. Gillenormand got up. He began walking up and down the room, with his hands in his pockets, talking aloud, and feeling with his old irritated fingers the two watches which he wore in his two fobs.

"That heap of scamps! so they are going to meet in the Place du Panthéon! *Vertu de ma mie!* little ragamuffins who were at nurse yesterday! if you were to squeeze their noses the milk would run out! And they are going to deliberate to-morrow! Where are we going? Where are we going? It is clear that we are going to the abyss, and the *descamisados* have led us to it. The citizen artillery! deliberate about the citizen artillery! go and chatter in the open air about the squibs of the National Guard! And whom will they meet there? Just let us see to what Jacobinism leads. I will wager whatever you like, a million against a counter, that there will be only liberated convicts and pickpockets there; for the Republicans and the galley-slaves are like one nose and one handkerchief. Carnot used to say, 'Where do you want me to go, traitor?' and Fouché answer, 'Wherever you like, imbecile!' That is what the Republicans are."

"That is true," said Théodule.

M. Gillenormand half turned his head, saw Théodule, and went on, —

Digitized by Microsoft®

"And then to think that that scamp had the villany to become a Republican! For what have you left my house? To become a Republican! Pest! In the first place, the people do not want your republic, for they are sensible, and know very well that there always have been kings, and always will be, and they know, after all, that the people are only the people, and they laugh at your republic, do you hear, idiot? Is not such a caprice horrible, — to fall in love with Père Duchêne, to ogle the guillotine, to sing romances, and play the guitar under the balcony of '93? Why, all these young men ought to be spat upon, for they are so stupid! They are all caught, and not one escapes, and they need only inhale the air of the street to go mad. The 19th century is poison; the first-comer lets his goat's beard grow, fully believes that he is a clever dog, and looks down on his old parents, — for that is republican, it is romantic. Just be good enough to tell me what that word romantic means? Every folly possible. A year ago they went to see *Hernani*. Just let me ask you — *Hernani!* antitheses, abominations, which are not even written in French. And then there are cannon in the court-yard of the Louvre; such is the brigandage of the present age."

"You are right, uncle," said Théodule.

M. Gillenormand continued, —

"Guns in the court-yard of the Museum! what to do? Cannon, what do you want of me? Do you wish to fire grape-shot at the Apollo Belvidere? What have serge-cartridges to do with the Venus de Medici? Oh, the young men of the present day are

Digitized by Microsoft®

ragamuffins, and this Benjamin Constant is not much! And those who are not villains are gawkies! They do all they can to make themselves ugly; they dress badly, they are afraid of women, and they have an imploring air about a petticoat that makes the wenches burst out laughing; on my word of honor, you might call them love's paupers, ashamed to beg. They are deformed, and perfect it by being stupid; they repeat the jokes of Tiercelin and Potier; they wear sack-coats, hostlers' waistcoats, trousers of coarse cloth, boots of coarse leather, and their chatter resembles their plumage, — their jargon might be employed to sole their boots. And all these silly lads have political opinions, and it ought to be strictly prohibited. They manufacture systems, they remodel society, they demolish the monarchy, upset all laws, put the garret in the place of the cellar, and my porter in the place of the king; they upset Europe from one end to the other, build up the world again, and their amours consist in looking sheepishly at the legs of the washerwomen as they get into their carts. Ah, Marius! ah, scoundrel! to go and vociferate in the public square! to discuss, debate, and form measures — they call them measures. Great gods! why, disorder is decreasing and becoming silly. I have seen chaos and I now see a puddle. Scholars deliberating about the National Guard! Why, that could not be seen among the Ojibbeways or the Cadodaches! The savages who go about naked, with their noddles dressed like a racket-bat, and with a club in their paw, are not such brutes as these bachelors, twopenny-halfpenny brats, who dare to decree

Digitized by Microsoft®

and order, deliberate and argue! Why, it is the end of the world; it is evidently the end of this wretched globe; it wanted a final shove, and France has given it. Deliberate, my scamps! These things will happen so long as they go to read the papers under the arcades of the Odéon; it costs them a sou, and their common sense, and their intelligence, and their heart, and their soul, and their mind. They leave that place, and then bolt from their family. All the newspapers are poison, even the *Drapeau Blanc*, and Martainville was a Jacobin at heart. Ah, just Heaven! you can boast of having rendered your grandfather desperate!"

"That is quite plain," said Théodule.

And taking advantage of the moment during which M. Gillenormand was recovering breath, the lancer added magisterially, —

"There ought to be no other paper but the *Moniteur*, and no other book but the Army List."

M. Gillenormand went on, —

"It is just like their Sièyes, — a regicide who became a senator! for they always end with that. They scar themselves with citizen familiarity, that they may be called in the long run Monsieur le Comte. Monsieur le Comte with a vengeance! slaughterers of September! The philosopher Sièyes! I do myself the justice of saying that I never cared any more for the philosophy of all these philosophers than I did for the spectacles of the grimacers at Tivoli. One day I saw the Senators pass along the Quay Malaquais, in violet velvet cloaks studded with bees, and wearing Henri IV. hats; they were hideous, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

looked like the apes of the tigers' court. Citizens, I declare to you that your progress is a madness, that your humanity is a dream, that your Revolution is a crime, that your Republic is a monster, that your young Virgin France emerges from a brothel; and I sustain it against you all. No matter whether you are journalists, social economists, lawyers, and greater connoisseurs of liberty, equality, and fraternity, than the cut-throat of the guillotine! I tell you this plainly, my good fellows."

"Parbleu!" the Lieutenant cried, "that is admirably true!"

M. Gillenormand interrupted a gesture which he had begun, turned round, gazed intently at Théodule the lancer, between the eyes, and said to him, —

"You are an ass!"

Digitized by Microsoft®

BOOK VI.

THE CONJUNCTION OF TWO STARS.

CHAPTER I.

NICKNAMES AND SURNAMES.

MARIUS at this period was a handsome young man of middle height, with very black hair, a lofty and intelligent forehead, open and impassioned nostrils, a sincere and calm air, and something haughty, pensive, and innocent was spread over his whole face. His profile, in which all the lines were rounded without ceasing to be firm, had that Germanic gentleness which entered France through Alsace and Lorraine, and that absence of angles which renders it so easy to recognize the Sicambri among the Romans, and distinguishes the leonine from the aquiline race. He had reached the season of life when the mind of men is composed of depth and simplicity in nearly equal proportions. A serious situation being given, he had all that was necessary to be stupid, but, with one more turn of the screw, he could be sublime. His manner was reserved, cold, polite, and unexpansive; but, as his mouth was beautiful, his lips bright vermilion, and his teeth the whitest in the world,

Digitized by Microsoft®

his smile corrected any severity in his countenance. At certain moments this chaste forehead and voluptuous smile offered a strange contrast. He had a small eye and a noble glance.

In the period of his greatest need he remarked that people turned to look at him when he passed, and he hurried away or hid himself, with death in his soul. He thought that they were looking at his shabby clothes and laughing at them; but the fact is, they were looking at his face, and thinking about it. This silent misunderstanding between himself and pretty passers-by had rendered him savage, and he did not select one from the simple reason that he fled from all. He lived thus indefinitely — stupidly, said Courfeyrac, who also added, — "Do not aspire to be venerable, and take one bit of advice, my dear fellow. Do not read so many books, and look at the wenches a little more, for they have some good about them. Oh, Marius! you will grow brutalized if you go on shunning women and blushing."

On other occasions, Courfeyrac, when he met him, would say, "Good-morning, Abbé." When Courfeyrac had made any remark of this nature, Marius for a whole week would shun women, young and old, more than ever, and Courfeyrac in the bargain. There were, however, in the whole immense creation, two women whom Marius did not shun, or to whom he paid no attention. To tell the truth, he would have been greatly surprised had any one told him that they were women. One was the hairy-faced old woman who swept his room, and induced Courfeyrac to remark, — "Seeing that his servant wears her beard,

Digitized by Microsoft®

Marius does not wear his;" the other was a young girl whom he saw very frequently and did not look at. For more than a year Marius had noticed in a deserted walk of the Luxembourg — the one which is bordered by the Parapet de la Pepinière — a man and a very young lady nearly always seated side by side at the most solitary end of the walk, near the Rue de l'Ouest. Whenever that chance, which mingles with the promenades of people whose eye is turned inwards, led Marius to this walk, and that was nearly daily, he met this couple again. The man seemed to be about sixty years of age; he appeared sad and serious, and the whole of his person presented the robust and fatigued appearance of military men who have retired from service. If he had worn a decoration, Marius would have said, "He is an old officer." He looked kind, but unapproachable, and never fixed his eye on that of another person. He wore blue trousers, a coat of the same color, and a broad-brimmed hat, all of which were constantly new, a black cravat, and a quaker's, that is to say, dazzlingly white, but very coarse shirt. A grisette who passed him one day said, "What a nice strong widower!" His hair was very white.

The first time that the young lady who accompanied him sat down with him upon the bench, which they seemed to have adopted, she was about thirteen or fourteen, so thin as to be almost ugly, awkward, insignificant, and promising to have perhaps very fine eyes some day; still they were always raised to the old gentleman with a species of displeasing assurance. She wore the garb, at once old

Digitized by Microsoft®

and childish, of boarders at a convent, — a badly-cut dress of coarse black merino. They looked like father and daughter. Marius examined for two or three days the old man, who was not yet aged, and this little girl, who was not yet a maiden, and then paid no further attention to them. They, on their side, seemed not even to see him, and talked together with a peaceful and careless air. The girl talked incessantly and gayly, the old man spoke but little, and at times he fixed upon her eyes filled with ineffable paternity. Marius had formed the mechanical habit of walking in this alley, and invariably found them there. This is how matters went on: —

Marius generally arrived by the end of the walk farthest from the bench; he walked the whole length, passed them, then turned back to the end by which he had arrived, and began again. He took this walk five or six times nearly every day in the week, but these persons and himself never even exchanged a bow. The man and the girl, though they appeared, and perhaps because they appeared, to shun observation, had naturally aroused to some little extent the attention of some students, who walked from time to time along La Pepinière, — the studious after lectures, the others after their game of billiards. Courfeyrac, who belonged to the latter, had watched them for some time, but finding the girl ugly, he got away from them very rapidly, firing at them like a Parthian a sobriquet. Being solely struck by the dress of the girl and the old man's hair, he christened the former Mlle. Lanoire, and the father Monsieur Leblanc, so that, as no one knew

Digitized by Microsoft®

them otherwise, this name adhered to them in the absence of a better one. The students said, "Ah, M. Leblanc is at his bench;" and Marius, like the rest, found it convenient to call this strange gentleman M. Leblanc. We will follow their example. Marius saw them nearly daily, at the same hour, during a year; he considered the man agreeable, but the girl rather insipid.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER II.

LUX FACTA EST.

In the second year, just at the point of our story which the reader has how reached, it happened that Marius broke off his daily walk in the Luxembourg, without exactly knowing why, and was nearly six months without setting foot in the garden. One day, however, he returned to it; it was a beauteous summer day, and Marius was joyous, as men are when the weather is fine. He felt as if he had in his heart all the birds' songs that he heard, and all the patches of blue sky of which he caught a glimpse between the leaves. He went straight to "his walk," and when he reached the end he noticed the well-known couple seated on the same bench; but when he drew near he found that while it was the same man, it did not seem to be the same girl. The person he now saw was a tall and lovely creature, possessing the charming outlines of the woman, at the precise moment when they are still combined with the most simple graces of the child, — a fugitive and pure moment which can alone be rendered by the two words "fifteen years." He saw admirable auburn hair tinted with streaks of gold, a forehead that seemed

Digitized by Microsoft®

made of marble, cheeks that seemed made of a rose-leaf, — a pale flesh tint, — an exquisite mouth, from which a smile issued like a flash and words like music, and a head which Raphael would have given to a Virgin, set upon a neck which Jean Goujon would have given to a Venus. And, that nothing might be wanting in this ravishing face, the nose was not beautiful, but pretty, neither straight nor bent, neither Italian nor Greek; it was the Parisian nose, that is to say, something witty, fine, irregular, and pure, which is the despair of painters and the charm of poets.

When Marius passed her he could not see her eyes, which she constantly drooped; he only saw her long brown eyelashes, pervaded with shade and modesty. This did not prevent the lovely girl from smiling while she listened to the white-haired man who was speaking to her, and nothing could be so ravishing as this fresh smile with the downcast eyes. At the first moment Marius thought that it was another daughter of the old gentleman's, — a sister of the former. But when the invariable habit of his walk brought him again to the bench, and he examined her attentively, he perceived that it was the same girl. In six months the girl had become a maiden, that was all; and nothing is more frequent than this phenomenon. There is a moment in which girls expand in the twinkling of an eye and all at once become roses; yesterday you left them children, to-day, you find them objects of anxiety. This girl had not only grown, but was idealized; as three days in April suffice to cover some trees

Digitized by Microsoft®

with flowers, six months had sufficed to clothe her with beauty; her April had arrived. We sometimes see poor and insignificant persons suddenly wake up, pass from indigence to opulence, lay out money in all sorts of extravagance, and become brilliant, prodigal, and magnificent. The reason is that they have just received their dividends; and the girl had been paid six months' income.

And then she was no longer the boarding-school Miss, with her plush bonnet, merino dress, thick shoes, and red hands; taste had come to her with beauty, and she was well dressed, with a species of simple, rich, and unaffected elegance. She wore a black brocade dress, a cloak of the same material, and a white crape bonnet; her white gloves displayed the elegance of her hand, which was playing with the ivory handle of a parasol, and her satin boot revealed the smallness of her foot; when you passed her, her whole toilette exhaled a youthful and penetrating perfume. As for the man, he was still the same. The second time that Marius passed, the girl raised her eyelids, and he could see that her eyes were of a deep cerulean blue, but in this veiled azure there was only the glance of a child. She looked at Marius carelessly, as she would have looked at the child playing under the sycamores, or the marble vase that threw a shadow over the bench; and Marius continued his walk, thinking of something else. He passed the bench four or five times, but did not once turn his eyes toward the young lady. On the following days he returned as usual to the Luxembourg; as usual he found the "father

Digitized by Microsoft®

and daughter" there, but he paid no further attention to them. He thought no more of the girl now that she was lovely than he had done when she was ugly; and though he always passed very close to the bench on which she was sitting, it was solely the result of habit.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER III.

THE EFFECT OF SPRING.

One day the air was warm, the Luxembourg was inundated with light and shade, the sky was as pure as if the angels had washed it that morning, the sparrows were twittering shrilly in the foliage of the chestnut-trees, and Marius opened his whole soul to nature. He was thinking of nothing; he loved and breathed; he passed by the bench; the young lady raised her eyes to him and their two glances met. What was there this time in her look? Marius could not have said: there was nothing and there was everything; it was a strange flash. She let her eyes fall, and he continued his walk. What he had just seen was not the simple and ingenuous eye of a child, but a mysterious gulf, the mouth of which had opened and then suddenly closed again. There is a day on which every maiden looks in this way, and woe to the man on whom her glance falls!

This first glance of a soul which does not yet know itself is like dawn in the heavens; it is the awakening of something radiant and unknown. Nothing can express the mysterious charm of this unexpected flash which suddenly illumines the adorable darkness, and is composed of all the innocence of the

Digitized by Microsoft®

present and all the passion of the future. It is a sort of undecided tenderness, which reveals itself accidentally and waits; it is a snare which innocence sets unconsciously, and in which it captures hearts without wishing or knowing it. It is a virgin who looks at you like a woman. It is rare for a profound reverie not to spring up wherever this flame falls; all purity and all candor are blended in this heavenly and fatal beam, which possesses, more than the best-managed ogles of coquettes, the magic power of suddenly causing that dangerous flower, full of perfume and poison, called love, suddenly to expand in the soul.

On returning to his garret in the evening, Marius took a glance at his clothes, and perceived for the first time that he had been guilty of the extraordinary impropriety and stupidity of walking in the Luxembourg in his "every-day dress;" that is to say, with a broken-brimmed hat, clumsy boots, black trousers white at the knees, and a black coat pale at the elbows.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER IV.

BEGINNING OF A GREAT MALADY.

THE next day, at the accustomed hour, Marius took out of the drawers his new coat, his new trousers, his new hat, and his new boots; he dressed himself in this complete panoply, put on gloves, — an extraordinary luxury, — and went off to the Luxembourg. On the road he met Courfeyrac, and pretended not to see him. Courfeyrac on reaching home said to his friends, —

"I have just met Marius's new hat and new coat and Marius inside them. He was going, I fancy, to pass some examination, for he looked so stupid."

On reaching the Luxembourg Marius walked round the basin and gazed at the swans; then he stood for a long time contemplating a statue all black with mould, and which had lost one hip. Near the basin was a comfortable bourgeois of about forty, holding by the hand a little boy, and saying to him, — "Avoid all excesses, my son; keep at an equal distance from despotism and anarchy." Marius listened to this bourgeois, then walked once again round the basin, and at length proceeded toward "his walk" slowly, and as if regretfully. He seemed to be at once forced and prevented from going, but he did not

Digitized by Microsoft®

explain this to himself, and fancied he was behaving as he did every day. On turning into the walk he saw M. Leblanc and the young lady at the other end, seated on "their bench." He buttoned up his coat to the top, pulled it down so that it should make no creases, examined with some complacency the lustre of his trousers, and marched upon the bench. There was attack in this march, and assuredly a desire for conquest, and hence I say that he marched upon this bench, as I would say Hannibal marched on Rome.

Still, all his movements were mechanical, and he had not in any way altered the habitual preoccupation of his mind and labors. He was thinking at this moment that the *Manuel de Baccalaureat* was a stupid book, and that it must have been edited by wondrous ignoramuses, who analyzed as masterpieces of the human mind three tragedies of Racine and only one comedy of Molière. He had a shrill whistling in his ear, and while approaching the bench he pulled down his coat, and his eyes were fixed on the maiden. He fancied that she filled the whole end of the walk with a vague blue light. As he drew nearer his pace gradually decreased. On coming within a certain distance of the bench, though still some distance from the end of the walk, he stopped, and did not know how it was that he turned back. The young lady was scarce able to notice him, and see how well he looked in his new suit. Still he held himself very erect, for fear any one behind might be looking at him.

He reached the opposite end, then returned, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

this time approached a little nearer to the bench. He even got within the distance of three trees, but then he felt an impossibility of going farther, and hesitated. He fancied he could see the young lady's face turned toward him; however, he made a masculine, violent effort, subdued his hesitation, and continued to advance. A few moments after he passed in front of the bench, upright and firm, but red up to the ears, and not daring to take a glance either to the right or left, and with his hand thrust into his coat like a statesman. At the moment when he passed under the guns of the fort he felt his heart beat violently. She was dressed as on the previous day, and he heard an ineffable voice which must "be her voice." She was talking quietly, and was very beautiful; he felt it, though he did not attempt to look at her, "and yet," he thought, "she could not fail to have esteem and consideration for me if she knew that I am the real author of the dissertation on Marcos Obregon de La Ronda, which M. François de Neufchâteau appropriated, at the beginning of his edition of *Gil Blas*."

He passed the bench, went to the end of the walk which was close by, then turned and again passed the young lady. This time he was very pale, and his feelings were most disagreeable. He went away from the bench and the maiden, and while turning his back, he fancied that she was looking at him, and this made him totter. He did not again attempt to pass the bench; he stopped at about the middle of the walk and then sat down, — a most unusual thing for him, — taking side glances, and thinking in the

Digitized by Microsoft®

innermost depths of his mind that after all it was difficult for a person whose white bonnet and black dress he admired to be absolutely insensible to his showy trousers and new coat. At the end of a quarter of an hour he rose, as if about to walk toward this bench which was surrounded by a glory, but he remained motionless. For the first time in fifteen months he said to himself that the gentleman who sat there daily with his daughter must have noticed him, and probably considered his assiduity strange. For the first time, too, he felt it was rather irreverent to designate this stranger, even in his own thoughts, by the nickname of M. Leblanc.

He remained thus for some minutes with hanging head, making sketches in the sand with the stick he held in his hand. Then he suddenly turned in the direction opposed to the bench and went home. That day he forgot to go to dinner; he noticed the fact at eight in the evening, and, as it was too late to go to the Rue St. Jacques, he ate a lump of bread. He did not go to bed till he had brushed and carefully folded up his coat.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER V.

MAME BOUGON IS THUNDER-STRUCK.

THE next day, Mame Bougon, — it was thus that Courfeyrac called the old portress, principal lodger, and charwoman, of No. 50–52, though her real name was Madame Bourgon, as we have stated; but that scamp of a Courfeyrac respected nothing, — Mame Bougon, to her stupefaction, noticed that Marius again went out in his best coat. He returned to the Luxembourg, but did not go beyond his half-way bench; he sat down there, as on the previous day, regarding from a distance, and seeing distinctly, the white bonnet, the black dress, and, above all, the blue radiance. He did not move or return home till the gates of the Luxembourg were closed. He did not see M. Leblanc and his daughter go away, and hence concluded that they left the garden by the gate in the Rue de l'Ouest. Some weeks after, when reflecting on the subject, he could never remember where he dined that day. On the next day, the third, Mame Bougon received another thunder-stroke; Marius went out in his new coat. "Three days running!" she exclaimed. She tried to follow him, but Marius walked quickly, and with immense strides: it was a hippopotamus attempting to overtake a

Digitized by Microsoft®

chamois. She lost him out of sight in two minutes, and went back panting, three parts choked by her asthma, and furious. "What sense is there," she growled, "in putting on one's best coat every day, and making people run like that!"

Marius had gone to the Luxembourg, where M. Leblanc and the young lady were already. Marius approached as near to them as he could, while pretending to read his book, though still a long distance off, and then sat down on his bench, where he spent four hours in watching the sparrows, which he fancied were ridiculing him, hopping about in the walk. A fortnight passed in this way; Marius no longer went to the Luxembourg to walk, but always to sit down at the same spot, without knowing why. Arriving, he did not stir. He every morning put on his new coat, although he did not show himself, and began again on the morrow. She was decidedly, marvellously beautiful; the sole remark resembling a criticism that could be made was that the contradiction between her glance, which was sad, and her smile, which was joyous, gave her face a slightly startled look, which at times caused this gentle face to become strange without ceasing to be charming.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VI.

TAKEN PRISONER.

On one of the last days of the second week Marius was as usual seated on his bench, holding in his hand an open book in which he had not turned a page for several months, when he suddenly started; an event was occurring at the end of the walk. M. Leblanc and his daughter had left their bench, the girl was holding her father's arm, and both were proceeding slowly toward the middle of the walk where Marius was. He shut his book, then opened it again and tried to read, but he trembled, and the glory came straight toward him. "Oh, Heaven!" he thought, "I shall not have the time to assume an attitude." The white-haired man and the girl, however, advanced; it seemed to him as if this lasted an age, and it was only a second. "What do they want here?" he asked himself. "What! she is going to pass here; her feet will tread this sand, this walk, two paces from me!" He was quite upset; he would have liked to be very handsome, and have the cross. He heard the soft measured sound of their footsteps approaching him, and he imagined that M. Leblanc glanced at him irritably. "Is this gentleman going to speak to me?" he thought. He hung his head, and when he raised

Digitized by Microsoft®

it again they were close to him. The girl passed, and in passing looked at him, — looked at him intently, with a thoughtful gentleness which made Marius shudder from head to foot. It seemed to him as if she reproached him for keeping away from her so long, and was saying, "I have come instead." Marius was dazzled by these eyeballs full of beams and abysses. He felt that his brain was on fire. She had come toward him — what joy! — and then, she had looked at him. She appeared to him lovelier than she had ever been, — lovely with a beauty at once feminine and angelic, a perfect beauty, which would have made Petrarch sing and Dante kneel. He felt as if he were floating in the blue sky, but at the same time he was horribly annoyed because he had dust on his boots, and he felt sure that she had looked at his boots too.

He looked after her till she disappeared, and then walked about the garden like a maniac. He probably at times laughed to himself and talked aloud. He was so pensive near the nursery-maids that each of them fancied him in love with her. He quitted the Luxembourg, hoping to meet her again in the street. He met Courfeyrac under the arcades of the Panthéon, and said to him, "Come and dine with me." They went to Rousseau's and spent six francs. Marius ate like an ogre, and gave six sous to the waiter. After dinner he said to Courfeyrac, "Have you read the papers? What a fine speech Audry de Puyraveau made!" He was distractedly in love. He then said to Courfeyrac, "Let us go to the theatre, — I'll pay." They went to the Porte St.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Martin to see Frederick in the "Auberge des Adrets," and Marius was mightily amused. At the same time he became more virtuous than ever. On leaving the theatre he refused to look at the garter of a dressmaker who was striding across a gutter, and Courfeyrac happening to say, "I should like to place that woman in my collection," he almost felt horrified. Courfeyrac invited him to breakfast next morning at the Café Voltaire. He went there, and ate even more than on the previous day. He was thoughtful and very gay, and seemed to take every opportunity to laugh noisily. A party of students collected round the table and spoke of the absurdities paid for by the State, which are produced from the pulpit of the Sorbonne, and then the conversation turned to the faults and gaps in dictionaries. Marius interrupted the discussion by exclaiming, "And yet it is very agreeable to have the cross."

"That is funny!" Courfeyrac whispered to Jean Prouvaire.

"No, it is serious," the other answered.

It was in truth serious; Marius had reached that startling and charming hour which commences great passions. A look had effected all this. When the mine is loaded, when the fire is ready, nothing is more simple, and a glance is a spark. It was all over; Marius loved a woman, and his destiny was entering the unknown. The glance of a woman resembles certain wheels which are apparently gentle but are formidable: you daily pass by their side with impunity, and without suspecting anything, and the moment arrives when you even forget that the thing

Digitized by Microsoft®

is there. You come, you go, you dream, you speak, you laugh, and all in a minute you feel yourself caught, and it is all over with you. The wheel holds you, the glance has caught you; it has caught, no matter where or how, by some part of your thought which dragged after you, or by some inattention on your part. You are lost, and your whole body will be drawn in; a series of mysterious forces seizes you, and you struggle in vain, for human aid is no longer possible. You pass from cog-wheel to cog-wheel, from agony to agony, from torture to torture, — you and your mind, your fortune, your future, and your soul; and, according as you are in the power of a wicked creature or of a noble heart, you will issue from this frightful machinery either disfigured by shame or transfigured by passion.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VII.

ADVENTURES OF THE LETTER "U" LEFT TO CONJECTURES.

Isolation, separation from everything, pride, independence, a taste for nature, the absence of daily and material labor, the soul-struggles of chastity, and his benevolent ecstasy in the presence of creation, had prepared Marius for that possession which is called passion. His reverence for his father had gradually become a religion, and, like all religions, withdrew into the depths of the soul: something was wanting for the foreground, and love came. A whole month passed, during which Marius went daily to the Luxembourg: when the hour arrived nothing could stop him. "He is on duty," Courfeyrac said. Marius lived in rapture, and it is certain that the young lady looked at him. In the end he had grown bolder, and went nearer the bench; still he did not pass in front of it, obeying at once the timid instincts and prudent instincts of lovers. He thought it advisable not to attract the father's attention, and hence arranged his stations behind trees and the pedestals of statues, with profound Machiavellism, so as to be seen as much as possible by the young lady and as little as possible by the old gentleman. At times he would be standing for half

Digitized by Microsoft®

an hour motionless in the shadow of some Leonidas or Spartacus, holding in one hand a book, over which his eyes, gently raised, sought the lovely girl; and she, for her part, turned her charming profile toward him with a vague smile. While talking most naturally and quietly with the white-haired man, she fixed upon Marius all the reveries of a virginal and impassioned glance. It is an old and immemorial trick which Eve knew from the first day of the world, and which every woman knows from the first day of her life. Her mouth replied to the one and her eye answered the other.

It must be supposed, however, that M. Leblanc eventually noticed something, for frequently when Marius arrived he got up and began walking. He left their accustomed seat, and adopted at the other end of the walk the bench close to the Gladiator, as if to see whether Marius would follow them. Marius did not understand it, and committed this fault. "The father" began to become unpunctual, and no longer brought "his daughter" every day. At times he came alone, and then Marius did not stop, and this was another fault. Marius paid no attention to these symptoms: from the timid phase he had passed by a natural and fatal progress into a blind phase. His love was growing, and he dreamed of it every night, and then an unexpected happiness occurred to him, like oil on fire, and redoubled the darkness over his eyes. One evening at twilight he found on the bench which "M. Leblanc and his daughter" had just quitted, a simple, unembroidered handkerchief, which, however, was white and pure, and seemed to

Digitized by Microsoft®

him to exhale ineffable odors. He seized it with transport, and noticed that it was marked with the letters "U. F." Marius knew nothing about the lovely girl, neither her family, her name, nor her abode; these two letters were the first thing of hers which he seized, — adorable initials, upon which he at once began to erect his scaffolding. "U" was evidently the Christian name: "Ursule!" he thought; "what a delicious name!" He kissed the handkerchief, smelt it, placed it on his heart during the day, and at night upon his lips to go to sleep.

"I can see her whole soul!" he exclaimed.

This handkerchief belonged to the old gentleman, who had simply let it fall from his pocket. On the following days, when Marius went to the Luxembourg, he kissed the handkerchief, and pressed it to his heart. The lovely girl did not understand what this meant, and expressed her surprise by imperceptible signs.

"Oh, modesty!" said Marius.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VIII.

EVEN INVALIDS MAY BE LUCKY.

SINCE we have uttered the word *modesty*, and as we conceal nothing, we are bound to say, however, that notwithstanding his ecstasy, on one occasion "his Ursule" caused him serious vexation. It was on one of the days when she induced M. Leblanc to leave the bench and walk about. There was a sharp spring breeze which shook the tops of the plane-trees; and father and daughter, arm in arm, had just passed in front of Marius, who rose and watched them, as was fitting for a man in his condition. All at once a puff of wind, more merry than the rest, and probably ordered to do the business of spring, dashed along the walk, enveloped the maiden in a delicious rustling worthy of the nymphs of Virgil and the Fauns of Theocritus, and raised her dress — that dress more sacred than that of Isis — almost as high as her garter. A leg of exquisite shape became visible. Marius saw it, and he was exasperated and furious. The maiden rapidly put down her dress, with a divinely startled movement, but he was not the less indignant. There was no one in the walk, it was true, but there might have been somebody; and if that somebody had been there! Is such a thing conceivable? What

Digitized by Microsoft®

she has just done is horrible! Alas! the poor girl had done nothing, and there was only one culprit, the wind; but Marius, in whom faintly quivered the Bartholo which is in Cherubino, was determined to be dissatisfied, and was jealous of his shadow; it is thus, in fact, that the bitter and strange jealousy of the flesh is aroused in the human heart, and dominates it, even unjustly. Besides, apart from his jealousy, the sight of this charming leg was not at all agreeable to him, and any other woman's white stocking would have caused him more pleasure.

When "his Ursule," after reaching the end of the walk, turned back with M. Leblanc, and passed in front of the bench on which Marius was sitting, he gave her a stern, savage glance. The girl drew herself slightly up, and raised her eyelids, which means, "Well, what is the matter now?" This was their first quarrel. Marius had scarce finished upbraiding her in this way with his eyes, when some one crossed the walk. It was a bending invalid, all wrinkled and white, wearing the uniform of Louis XV., having on his chest the little oval red cloth badge with crossed swords, the soldier's cross of Saint Louis, and decorated besides with an empty coat-sleeve, a silver chin, and a wooden leg. Marius fancied he could notice that this man had an air of satisfaction; it seemed to him that the old cynic, while hobbling past him, gave him a fraternal and extremely jovial wink, as if some accident had enabled them to enjoy in common some good thing. Why was this relic of Mars so pleased? What had occurred between this wooden leg and the other? Marius attained the

Digitized by Microsoft®

paroxysm of jealousy. "He was perhaps there," he said to himself; "perhaps he saw," and he felt inclined to exterminate the invalid.

With the help of time every point grows blunted, and Marius's anger with "Ursule," though so just and legitimate, passed away. He ended by pardoning her; but it was a mighty effort, and he sulked with her for three days. Still, through all this, and owing to all this, his passion increased, and became insane.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER IX.

ECLIPSE.

We have seen how Marius discovered, or fancied he had discovered, that her name was Ursule. Appetite comes while loving, and to know that her name was Ursule was a great deal already, but it was little. In three or four weeks Marius had devoured this happiness and craved another; he wished to know where she lived. He had made the first fault in falling into the trap of the Gladiator's bench; he had committed a second by not remaining at the Luxembourg when M. Leblanc went there alone; and he now committed a third, an immense one, — he followed "Ursule." She lived in the Rue de l'Ouest, in the most isolated part, in a new three-storied house of modest appearance. From this moment Marius added to his happiness of seeing her at the Luxembourg the happiness of following her home. His hunger increased; he knew what her name was, her Christian name at least, the charming, the real name of a woman; he knew where she lived; and he now wanted to know who she was. One evening after following them home, and watching them disappear in the gateway, he went in after them, and valiantly addressed the porter.

Digitized by Microsoft®

"Is that the gentleman of the first floor who has just come in?"

"No," the porter answered, "it is the gentleman of the third floor."

Another step made! This success emboldened Marius.

"Front?" he asked.

"Hang it!" said the porter, "our rooms all look on the street."

"And what is the gentleman?" Marius continued.

"He lives on his property. He is a very good man, who does a deal of good to the unhappy, though he is not rich."

"What is his name?" Marius added.

The porter raised his head and said,—

"Are you a police spy, sir?"

Marius went off much abashed, but highly delighted, for he was progressing.

"Good!" he thought; "I know that her name is Ursule, that she is the daughter of a retired gentleman, and that she lives there, on a third floor in the Rue de l'Ouest."

On the morrow M. Leblanc and his daughter made but a short appearance at the Luxembourg, and went away in broad daylight. Marius followed them to the Rue de l'Ouest, as was his habit, and on reaching the gateway M. Leblanc made his daughter go in first, then stopped, turned, and looked intently at Marius. The next day they did not come to the Luxembourg, and Marius waited in vain the whole day. At nightfall he went to the Rue de l'Ouest, and noticed a light in the third-floor windows, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

he walked about beneath these windows till the light was extinguished. The next day there was no one at the Luxembourg; Marius waited all day, and then went to keep his night-watch under the windows. This took him till ten o'clock, and his dinner became what it could; for fever nourishes the sick man and love the lover. Eight days passed in this way, and M. Leblanc and his daughter did not again appear at the Luxembourg. Marius made sorrowful conjectures, for he did not dare watch the gateway by day; he contented himself with going at night to contemplate the reddish brightness of the window-panes. He saw shadows pass now and then, and his heart beat.

On the eighth day, when he arrived beneath the windows, there was no light. "What!" he said to himself, "the lamp is not lighted! can they have gone out?" He waited till ten o'clock, till midnight, till one o'clock, but no light was kindled at the third-floor windows, and nobody entered the house. He went away with very gloomy thoughts. On the morrow — for he only lived from morrow to morrow, and he had no to-day, so to speak — he saw nobody at the Luxembourg, as he expected, and at nightfall he went to the house. There was no light at the windows, the shutters were closed, and the third floor was all darkness. Marius rapped, walked in, and said to the porter, —

"The gentleman on the third floor?"

"Moved," the porter answered.

Marius tottered, and asked feebly, —

"Since when?"

Digitized by Microsoft

"Yesterday."

"Where is he living now?"

"I do not know."

"Then he did not leave his new address?"

"No."

And the porter, raising his nose, recognized Marius.

"What! it's you, is it?" he said; "why, you must really be a police spy."

Digitized by Microsoft®

BOOK VII.

PATRON MINETTE.

CHAPTER I.

MINES AND MINERS.

HUMAN societies have ever what is called in theatres "un troisième dessous," and the social soil is everywhere undermined, here for good and there for evil. These works are upon one another; there are upper mines and lower mines, and there is a top and bottom in this obscure sub-soil, which at times gives way beneath the weight of civilization, and which our indifference and carelessness trample under foot. The Encyclopædia was in the last century an almost open mine, and the darkness, that gloomy brooder of primitive Christianity, only awaited an occasion to explode beneath the Cæsars and inundate the human race with light. For in the sacred darkness there is latent light, and the volcanoes are full of a shadow which is capable of flashing, and all lava begins by being night. The catacombs in which the first Mass was read were not merely the cellar of Rome but also the vault of the world.

There are all sorts of excavations beneath the social building, that marvel complicated by a hovel;

Digitized by Microsoft®

there is the religious mine, the philosophic mine, the political mine, the social economic mine, and the revolutionary mine. One man picks with the idea, another with figure, another with auger, and they call to and answer each other from the catacombs. Utopias move in subterranean passages and ramify in all directions; they meet there at times and fraternize. Jean Jacques lends his pick to Diogenes, who lends him his lantern in turn; at times, though, they fight, and Calvin clutches Socinus by the hair. But nothing arrests or interrupts the tension of all their energies toward the object, and the vast simultaneous energy, which comes and goes, ascends, descends, and reascends, in the obscurity, and which slowly substitutes top for bottom and inside for out; it is an immense and unknown ant-heap. Society hardly suspects this excavation, which leaves no traces on its surface and yet changes its insides; and there are as many different works and varying extractions as there are subterranean tiers. What issues from all these deep excavations? The future.

The deeper we go the more mysterious the mines become. To a certain point which the social philosopher is able to recognize the labor is good; beyond that point it is doubtful and mixed, and lower still it becomes terrible. At a certain depth the excavations can no longer be endured by the spirit of civilization, and man's limit of breathing is passed: a commencement of monsters becomes possible. The descending ladder is strange, and each rung corresponds with a stage upon which philosophy can land, and meet one of these miners, who are sometimes

Digitized by Microsoft®

divine, at others deformed. Below John Huss there is Luther; below Luther, Descartes; below Descartes, Voltaire; below Voltaire, Condorcet; below Condorcet, Robespierre; below Robespierre, Marat; and below Marat, Babeuf; and so it goes on. Lower still we notice confusedly, at the limit which separates the indistinct from the invisible, other gloomy men, who perhaps do not yet exist: those of yesterday are spectres, those of the morrow grubs. The mental eye can only distinguish them obscurely, and the embryonic labor of the future is one of the visions of the philosopher. A world in limbo at the fœtus stage — what an extraordinary sketch! St. Simon, Owen, and Fourrier are also there in the side-passages.

Assuredly, although a divine and invisible chain connects together without their cognizance all these subterranean miners, who nearly always fancy themselves isolated but are not so, their labors vary greatly, and the light of the one contrasts with the dazzle of the other: some are celestial and others tragical. Still, however great the contrast may be, all these laborers, from the highest to the most nocturnal, from the wisest down to the maddest, have a similitude in their disinterestedness: they leave themselves on one side, omit themselves, do not think of themselves, and see something different from themselves. They have a glance, and that glance seeks the absolute; the first has heaven in his eyes, and the last, however enigmatical he may be, has beneath his eyebrow the pale brightness of infinity. Venerate every man, no matter what he may

Digitized by Microsoft®

be doing, — any man who has the sign, a starry eyeball. The dark eyeball is the other sign, and with it evil begins. Before the man who has this look, think and tremble. Social order has its black miners. There is a point where profundity is burial and where light is extinguished. Below all these mines which we have indicated, — below all these galleries, below all this immense subterranean arterial system of progress and Utopia, far deeper in the ground, below Marat, below Babeuf, much, much lower, there is the last passage, which has no connection with the upper drifts. It is a formidable spot, and what we termed the *troisième dessous.* It is the grave of darkness and the cave of the blind, *Inferi,* and communicates with the abysses.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER II.

THE BOTTOM.

Here disinterestedness fades away, and the dream is vaguely sketched. Every one for himself. The eyeless I yells, seeks, gropes, and groans: the social Ugolino is in this gulf. The ferocious shadows which prowl about this grave, almost brutes, almost phantoms, do not trouble themselves about human progress; they are ignorant of ideas and language, and thus they care for nought beyond individual gratification. They are almost unconscious, and there is within them a species of frightful obliteration. They have two mothers, both step-mothers, — ignorance and wretchedness. They have for their guide want, and for all power of satisfaction appetite; they are brutally voracious, that is to say, ferocious, — not after the fashion of the tyrant, but that of the tiger. From suffering these grubs pass to crime, — it is a fatal affiliation, a ghastly propagation, the logic of darkness; what crawls in the lowest passage is no longer the stifled demand of the absolute, but the protest of matter. Man becomes a dragon then; his starting-point is to be hungry and thirsty, and his terminus is to be Satan. Lacenaire issued from this cave.

Digitized by Microsoft®

We have just seen one of the compartments of the upper mine, the great political, revolutionary, and philosophic sap. There, as we said, all is noble, pure, worthy, and honest: men may be mistaken in it, and are mistaken, but the error must be revered, because it implies so much heroism, and the work performed there has a name, — Progress. The moment has now arrived to take a glance at other and hideous depths. There is beneath society, and there ever will be, till the day when ignorance is dissipated, the great cavern of evil. This cavern is below all the rest, and the enemy of all; it is hatred without exception. This cavern knows no philosophers, and its dagger never made a pen, while its blackness bears no relation with the sublime blackness of the inkstand. The fingers of night, which clench beneath this asphyxiating roof, never opened a book or unfolded a newspaper. Babeuf is to Cartouche a person who takes advantage of his knowledge, and Marat an aristocrat in the sight of Schinderhannes, and the object of this cavern is the overthrow of everything.

Of everything, — including the upper levels, which it execrates. It not only undermines in its hideous labor the existing social order, but it undermines philosophy, science, the law, human thought, civilization, revolution, and progress, and it calls itself most simply, robbery, prostitution, murder, and assassination. It is darkness, and desires chaos, and its roof is composed of ignorance. All the other mines above it have only one object, to suppress it; and philosophy and progress strive for this with all their

Digitized by Microsoft®

organs simultaneously, by the amelioration of the real, as well as the contemplation of the ideal. Destroy the cave, Ignorance, and you destroy the mole, Crime. Let us condense in a few words a portion of what we have just written. The sole social evil is darkness; humanity is identity, for all men are of the same clay, and in this nether world, at least, there is no difference in predestination; we are the same shadow before, the same flesh during, and the same ashes afterwards: but ignorance, mixed with the human paste, blackens it, and this incurable blackness enters man and becomes Evil there.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER III.

BABET, GUEULEMER, CLAQUESOUS, AND MONTPARNASSE.

A QUARTETTE of bandits, Babet, Gueulemer, Claquesous, and Montparnasse, governed, from 1830 to 1835, the lowest depths of Paris. Gueulemer was a Hercules out of place, and his den was the Arche-Marion sewer. He was six feet high, had lungs of marble, muscles of bronze, the respiration of a cavern, the bust of a colossus, and a bird's skull. You fancied you saw the Farnèse Hercules, attired in ticking trousers and a cotton-velvet jacket. Gueulemer built in this mould might have subdued monsters, but he had found it shorter to be one. A low forehead, wide temples, under forty years of age, but with crow's-feet, rough short hair, and a bushy beard,—you can see the man. His muscles demanded work, and his stupidity would not accept it: he was a great slothful strength, and an assassin through nonchalance. People believed him to be a Creole, and he had probably laid his hands upon Marshal Brune when massacred, as he was a porter at Avignon in 1815. From that stage he had become a bandit.

Babet's transparency contrasted with the meat of Gueulemer; he was thin and learned,—transparent but impenetrable: you might see the light through

Digitized by Microsoft®

his bones, but not through his eyes. He called himself a chemist, had been a clown with Bobêche and a harlequin with Bobino, and had played in the vaudeville at St. Mihiel. He was a man of intentions, and a fine speaker, who underlined his smiles and placed his gestures between inverted commas. His trade was to sell in the open air plaster busts and portraits of the "chief of the State," and, in addition, he pulled teeth out. He had shown phenomena at fairs, and possessed a booth with a trumpet and the following show-board, — "Babet, dentist, and member of the academies, performs physical experiments on metals and metalloids, extirpates teeth, and undertakes stumps given up by the profession. Terms: one tooth, one franc fifty centimes; two teeth, two francs; three teeth, two francs fifty centimes. Take advantage of the opportunity." (The last sentence meant, Have as many teeth pulled out as possible.) He was married and had children, but did not know what had become of wife or children: he had lost them, just as another man loses his handkerchief. Babet was a high exception in the obscure world to which he belonged, for he read the newspapers. One day, at the time when he still had his family with him in his caravan, he read in the *Moniteur* that a woman had just been delivered of a child with a calf's snout, and exclaimed, "There 's a fortune! My wife would not have the sense to produce me a child like that!" Since then he had given up everything to "undertake Paris:" the expression is his own.

What was Claquesous? He was night; and never showed himself till the sky was bedaubed with black-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ness. In the evening he emerged from a hole, to which he returned before daybreak. Where was this hole? No one knew. In the greatest darkness, and when alone with his accomplices, he turned his back when he spoke to them. Was his name Claquesous? No: he said, "My name is Not-at-all." If a candle were brought in he put on a mask, and he was a ventriloquist into the bargain, and Babet used to say, "Claquesous is a night-bird with two voices." Claquesous was vague, wandering, and terrible: no one was sure that he had a name, for Claquesous was a nickname; no one was sure that he had a voice, for his stomach spoke more frequently than his mouth; and no one was sure that he had a face, as nothing had ever been seen but his mask. He disappeared like a ghost, and when he appeared he seemed to issue from the ground.

Montparnasse was a sorry sight. He was a lad not yet twenty, with a pretty face, lips that resembled cherries, beautiful black hair, and the brightness of spring in his eyes: he had every vice, and aspired to every crime, and the digestion of evil gave him an appetite for worse. He was the gamin turned pickpocket, and the pickpocket had become a garroter. He was genteel, effeminate, graceful, robust, soft, and ferocious. The left-hand brim of his hat was turned up to make room for the tuft of hair, in the style of 1829. He lived by robbery committed with violence, and his coat was cut in the latest fashion, though worn at the seams. Montparnasse was an engraving of the fashions, in a state of want, and committing murders. The cause of all the attacks made by this

Digitized by Microsoft®

young man was a longing to be well dressed: the first grisette who said to him, "You are handsome," put the black spot in his heart, and made a Cain of this Abel. Finding himself good-looking, he wished to be elegant, and the first stage of elegance is idleness: but the idleness of the poor man is crime. Few prowlers were so formidable as Montparnasse, and at the age of eighteen he had several corpses behind him. More than one wayfarer lay in the shadow of this villain with outstretched arms, and with his face in a pool of blood. Curled, pomaded, with his waist pinched in, the hips of a woman, the bust of a Prussian officer, the buzz of admiration of the girls of the boulevard around him, a carefully-tied cravat, a life-preserver in his pocket, and a flower in his buttonhole,—such was this dandy of the tomb.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER IV.

COMPOSITION OF THE TROOP.

THESE four bandits formed a species of Proteus, winding through the police ranks and striving to escape the indiscreet glances of Vidocq "under various shapes, — tree, flame, and fountain," — borrowing one another's names and tricks, asylums for one another, laying aside their personality as a man removes a false nose at a masquerade; at times simplifying themselves so as to be only one man, at others multiplying themselves to such an extent that Coco-Latour himself took them for a mob. These four men were not four men; they were a species of four-headed robber working Paris on a grand scale; the monstrous polype of evil inhabiting the crypt of society. Owing to their ramifications and the subjacent network of their relations, Babet, Gueulemer, Claquesous, and Montparnasse had the general direction of all the foul play in the department of the Seine. The finders of ideas in this style, the men with nocturnal imaginations, applied to them to execute them; the four villains were supplied with the canvas, and they produced the scenery. They were always in a position to supply a proportionate and proper staff for every robbery which was sufficiently lucrative and

Digitized by Microsoft®

required a stout arm. If a crime were in want of persons to carry it out, they sub-let the accomplices, and they always had a band of actors at the service of all the tragedies of the caverns.

They generally met at nightfall, the hour when they awoke, on the steppes that border the Salpêtrière. There they conferred, and, as they had the twelve dark hours before them, they settled their employment. *Patron Minette* was the name given in the subterranean lurking-places to the association of these four men. In the old and fantastic popular language, which is daily dying out, Patron Minette signifies the morning, just as "between dog and wolf" signifies night. This appellation was probably derived from the hour when their work finished, for dawn is the moment for spectres to fade away and for bandits to part. These four men were known by this title. When the President of the Assizes visited Lacenaire in prison, he questioned him about a crime which the murderer denied. "Who committed it?" the President asked; and Lacenaire gave this answer, which was enigmatical for the magistrate, but clear for the police, — "It is, perhaps, Patron Minette."

The plot of a play may be at times divined from the list of names; and a party of bandits may perhaps be appreciated in the same way. Here are the names to which the principal members of Patron Minette answered, exactly as they survive in special memoirs.

Panchaud called Spring, *alias* Bigrenaille, Brujon (there was a dynasty of Brujons, about whom we may still say a word); Boulatruelle, the road-mender,

Digitized by Microsoft®

of whom we have caught a glimpse; Laveuve; Finistère; Homer-Hogu, a negro; Tuesday night; Make haste; Fauntleroy, *alias* Flower-girl; Glorious, a liberated convict; Stop the coach, *alias* Monsieur Dupont; The Southern Esplanade; Poussagrive; Carmagnolet; Kruideniers, *alias* Bizarro; Lace-eater; Feet in the air; Half farthing, *alias* Two Milliards, etc. etc.

These names have faces, and express not merely beings but species. Each of these names responds to a variety of the poisonous fungi which grow beneath human civilization. These beings, very careful about showing their faces, were not of those whom we may see passing by day, for at that period, weary of their night wanderings, they went to sleep in the lime-kilns, the deserted quarries of Montmartre or Montrouge, or even in the snow. They ran to earth.

What has become of these men? They still exist, and have ever existed. Horace alludes to them in his *Ambubaiarum collegia, pharmacopolæ, mendici, mimæ*, and so as long as society is what it is they will be what they are. Under the obscure vault of their cellar they are even born again from the social leakage; they return as spectres, but ever identical. The only difference is that they no longer bear the same names and are no longer in the same skins; though the individuals are extirpated, the tribe exists. They have always the same qualities, and from vagrant to prowler, the race ever remains pure. They guess purses in pockets and scent watches in fobs; and gold and silver have a peculiar smell for them. There are simple cits of whom we might say that they have

Digitized by Microsoft®

a robbable look, and these men patiently follow these cits. When a foreigner or a countryman passes, they quiver like the spider in its web.

These men, when we catch a glimpse of them upon a deserted boulevard at midnight, are frightful; they do not seem to be men, but forms made of living fog; we might say that they are habitually a portion of the darkness, that they are not distinct, that they have no other soul but shadow, and that they have become detached from night momentarily, and in order to live a monstrous life for a few moments. What is required to make these phantoms vanish? Light, floods of light. Not a single bat can resist the dawn. Light up the lower strata of society.

Digitized by Microsoft®

BOOK VIII.

THE EVIL POOR.

CHAPTER I.

MARIUS LOOKING FOR A GIRL'S BONNET MEETS A MAN'S CAP.

SUMMER passed away, then autumn and winter arrived. Neither M. Leblanc nor the young lady had set foot again in the Luxembourg, while Marius had but one thought, that of seeing again this sweet and adorable face. He sought it ever, he sought it everywhere, but found nothing. He was no longer Marius the enthusiastic dreamer, the resolute, ardent, and firm man, the bold challenger of destiny, the brain that built up future upon future, the young mind encumbered with plans, projects, pride, ideas, and resolves, — he was a lost dog. He fell into a dark sorrow, and it was all over with him; work was repulsive, walking fatigued him, and solitude wearied him. Mighty nature, once so full of forms, brightness, voices, counsel, perspectives, horizons, and instruction, was now a vacuum before him; and he felt as if everything had disappeared. He still thought, for he could not do otherwise, but no longer

Digitized by Microsoft®

took pleasure in his thoughts. To all that they incessantly proposed to him in whispers, he answered in the shadow, "What use is it?" He made himself a hundred reproaches. "Why did I follow her? I was so happy merely in seeing her! She looked at me, and was not that immense? She looked as if she loved me, and was not that everything? I wanted to have what? There is nothing beyond that, and I was absurd. It is my fault," etc. etc. Courfeyrac, to whom he confided nothing, as was his nature, but who guessed pretty nearly all, for that was his nature too, had begun by congratulating him on being in love, and made sundry bad jokes about it. Then, on seeing Marius in this melancholy state, he ended by saying to him, "I see that you have simply been a fool; come to the Chaumière."

Once, putting confidence in a splendid September sun, Marius allowed himself to be taken to the ball of Sceaux by Courfeyrac, Bossuet, and Grantaire, hoping — what a dream! — that he might find her there. Of course he did not see the lady whom he sought; "and yet this is the place where all the lost women can be found," Grantaire growled aside. Marius left his friends at the ball, and returned afoot, alone, tired, feverish, with eyes troubled and sad, in the night, stunned with noise and dust by the many vehicles full of singing beings who were returning from the holiday, and who passed him. He was discouraged, and in order to relieve his aching head, inhaled the sharp smell of the walnut-trees on the road-side. He began living again more than ever in solitude, crushed, giving way to his internal agony,

Digitized by Microsoft®

walking up and down like a wolf caught in a trap, everywhere seeking the absent one, and brutalized by love.

Another time he had a meeting which produced a strange effect upon him. In the little streets adjoining the Boulevard des Invalides he passed a man dressed like a workman, and wearing a deep-peaked cap, under which white locks peered out. Marius was struck by the beauty of this white hair, and looked at the man, who was walking slowly, and as if absorbed in painful meditation. Strange to say, he fancied that he could recognize M. Leblanc, — it was the same hair, the same profile, as far as the peak allowed him to see, and the same gait, though somewhat more melancholy. But why this workman's clothing? What was the meaning of this disguise? Marius was greatly surprised, and when he came to himself again his first impulse was to follow this man, for he might, perhaps, hold the clew which he had so long been seeking, At any rate, he must have a close look at the man, and clear up the enigma; but he hit on this idea too late, for the man was no longer there. He had turned into some side street, and Marius was unable to find him again. This meeting troubled him for some days, and then faded away. "After all," he said to himself, "it is probably only a resemblance."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER II.

MARIUS FINDS SOMETHING.

MARIUS still lived at the Gorbeau house, but he paid no attention to his fellow-lodgers. At this period, in truth, there were no other tenants in the house but himself and those Jondrettes whose rent he had once paid, without ever having spoken to father, mother, or daughters. The other lodgers had removed, were dead, or turned out for not paying their rent. On one day of this winter the sun had shown itself a little during the afternoon, but it was Feb. 2, that old Candlemas day, whose treacherous sun, the precursor of a six weeks' frost, inspired Matthew Laensberg with these two lines, which have justly become classical, —

> "Qu'il luise ou qu'il luiserne
> L'ours rentre en sa caverne."

Marius had just left his cavern, for night was falling. It was the hour to go and dine, for he had been obliged to revert to that practice, such is the infirmity of ideal passions. He had just crossed the threshold of his door, which Mame Bougon was sweeping at this very moment, while uttering the memorable soliloquy, —

Digitized by Microsoft®

"What is there cheap at present? Everything is dear. There is only trouble which is cheap, and it may be had for nothing."

Marius slowly walked along the boulevard, in the direction of the Rue St. Jacques. He walked thoughtfully with hanging head. All at once he felt himself elbowed in the fog. He turned and saw two girls in rags, one tall and thin, the other not quite so tall, who passed hurriedly, panting, frightened, and as if running away; they were coming toward him, and ran against him as they passed. Marius noticed in the twilight their livid faces, uncovered heads, dishevelled hair, their ragged petticoats, and bare feet. While running they talked together, and the elder said, —

"The slops came, and nearly caught me."

And the other answered, "I saw them, and so I bolted, bolted, bolted."

Marius understood, from this sinister slang, that the police had nearly caught the two girls, and that they had managed to escape. They buried themselves beneath the trees behind him, and for a few minutes produced a sort of vague whiteness in the obscurity. Marius had stopped for a moment, and was just going on, when he noticed a small gray packet lying at his feet. He stooped down and picked it up; it was a sort of envelope, apparently containing papers.

"Why," he said, "these poor girls must have let it fall."

He turned back and called to them, but could not find them. He thought they must be some distance

Digitized by Microsoft®

off, so he thrust the parcel into his pocket and went to dinner. On his way he saw in a lane turning out of the Rue Mouffetard, a child's coffin, covered with a black pall, laid on three chairs, and illumined by a candle. The two girls in the twilight reverted to his thoughts.

"Poor mothers!" he thought, "there is something even more sad than to see one's children die, — it is to see them live badly."

Then these shadows, which varied his melancholy, left his thoughts, and he fell back into his usual reflections. He began thinking of his six months of love and happiness in the open air and broad daylight under the glorious Luxembourg trees.

"How sad my life has become!" he said to himself; "girls constantly appear to me, but formerly they were angels, and now they are ghouls."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER III.

FOUR LETTERS.

At night, as he undressed to go to bed, his hand felt in his coat pocket the parcel which he had picked up in the boulevard and forgotten. He thought that it would be as well to open it, as the packet might contain the girls' address, if it belonged to them, or in any case the necessary information to restore it to the person to whom it belonged. He opened the envelope, which was not sealed, and contained four letters, also unsealed. The addresses were on all four, and they exhaled a frightful perfume of tobacco. The first letter was addressed, — "To Madame, Madame la Marquise de Grucheray, on the Square opposite the Chamber of Deputies." Marius said to himself that he would probably find the information he wanted, and as the letter was not sealed he could read it without impropriety. It was drawn up as follows: —

"Madame la Marquise, — The virtue of clemency and piety is that which unites sosiety most closely. Move your Christian feelings, and dain a glance of compasion at this unfortunate Spaniard, and victim to his loyalty and atachment to the sacred cause of legitimacy, who shed his blood, devoted the

Digitized by Microsoft®

whole of his fortune to defend this cause, and is now in the greatest missery. He does not doubt that you, honnored lady, will grant some asistence to preserve an existence entirely painful for a soldier of honor and edducation, who is covered with wounds, and he reckons before hand on the humanity which annimates you, and the interest which your ladyship takes in so unhapy a nacion. Their prayer will not be in vain, and His gratitude will retain her charming memory.

"With the most respectful feelings, I have the honor to be, madame,

"DON ALVARES,

Spanish captain of cavvalry, a Royalist refugee in France, who is travelling for his country, and who wants the means to continue his jurney."

No address was attached to the signature, but Marius hoped to find it in the second letter, of which the superscription was, — "To Madame, Madame la Comtesse de Montvernet, Rue Cassette, No. 9. This is what Marius read: —

"MADAME LA COMTESSE, — It is a unhapy mother of a familly of six children, of which the yungest is only eight months old; I ill since my last confinement, deserted by my husband, and havving no ressourse in the world, living in the most frightful indijance.

"Trusting in your ladyship, she has the honor to be, madame, with profound respect,

"FEMME BALIZARD."

Digitized by Microsoft®

Marius passed to the third letter, which was, like the preceding, a petition, and he read in it:—

"MONSIEUR PABOURGEOT, *Elector, wholesale dealer in caps, Rue St. Denis, at the corner of the Rue Aux-Fers:*

"I venture to adress this letter to you, to ask you to grant me the pretious favor of your sympathies, and to interest you in a litterary man, who has just sent a drama to the Théâtre Français. The subject is historical, and the scene takes place in Auvergne in the time of the Empire; the style, I believe, is natural, laconic, and may posess some merit. There are couplets for singing at four places. The comic, the serious, and the unexpected elements are blended in it with a variety of characters, and a tinge of romance is lightly spread through the whole plot, which moves misteriously, and the finale takes place amid several brilliant tableaux. My principal desire is to sattisfy the desire which progressively animates sosiety, that is to say, fashion, that capritious and vague whirligig which changes with nearly every wind.

"In spite of these quallities, I have reason to fear that jealousy and the selfishness of privileged authors may obtain my exclusion from the stage, for I am not unaware of the vexation which is caused to new-comers.

"Monsieur Pabourgeot, your just reputation as the enlightened protector of litterary men, emboldens me to send to you my daughter, who will explain to you our indijant situation, wanting for bread and fire in this winter season. To tell you that I wish

Digitized by Microsoft®

you to accept the homage which I desire to make to you of my drama, and all those that may succeed it, is to prove to you how much I desire the honor of sheltering myself under your ægis, and adorning my writings with your name. If you dain to honor me with the most modest offering, I will at once set to work writing a coppy of verses, by which to pay you my debt of grattitude. These verses, which I will try to render as perfect as possible, will be sent to you before they are insirted in the beginning of the drama, and produced on the stage.

"My most respectful homage to Monsieur and Madame Pabourgeot,

"GENFLOT, *man of letters.*

"P. S. If it was only forty sous. I appologize for sending my daughter, and not paying my respects personaly, but sad reasons of dress do not allow me, alas! to go out."

Marius then opened the last letter, which was addressed "To the Benevolent gentleman of the church of St. Jacques du Haut-pas," and it contained the following few lines: —

"BENEVOLENT MAN, — If you will dain to accompany my daughter you will witness a misserable calamity, and I will show you my certificates.

"At the sight of these dokuments your generous soul will be moved by a feeling of sensitive benevolence, for true philosophers always experience lively emotions.

"Allow, compasionate man, that a man must experience the most cruel want, and that it is very

Digitized by Microsoft®

painful to obtain any relief, by having it attested by the authorities, as if a man were not at liberty to suffer and die of inanicion, while waiting till our missery is releaved. Fate is too cruel to some and too lavish or protecting for others. I await your presence or your offering, if you dain to make one, and I beg you to believe in the grateful feelings with which I have the honor of being, really magnamious sir,

"Your very humble, and most obedient servant,

"P. FABANTOU, *dramatic artist.*"

After reading these four letters Marius did not find himself much more advanced than before. In the first place not one of the writers gave his address; and next they appeared to come from four different individuals, — "Don Alvarez, Madame Balizard, the poet Genflot, and the dramatic artist Fabantou;" but these letters offered this peculiarity, that they were all in the same handwriting. What could be concluded from this, save that they came from the same person? Moreover — and this rendered the conjecture even more probable — the paper, which was coarse and yellow, was the same for all four, the tobacco smell was the same, and though an attempt had evidently been made to vary the handwriting, the same orthographical mistakes were reproduced with the most profound tranquillity, and Genflot, the man of letters, was no more exempt from them than the Spanish captain. To strive and divine this mystery was time thrown away, and if he had not picked it up it would have looked like

Digitized by Microsoft®

a mystification; Marius was too sad to take kindly even a jest of accident, and lend himself to a game which the street pavement appeared desirous to play with him. He felt as if he were playing at blind-man's-buff among these four letters and they were mocking him. Nothing, besides, indicated that these letters belonged to the girls whom Marius had met in the boulevard. After all they were papers evidently of no value. Marius returned them to the envelope, threw the lot into a corner, and went to bed.

At about seven in the morning he had got up and breakfasted, and was trying to set to work, when there came a gentle tap at the door. As he possessed nothing he never took out his key, except very rarely when he had a pressing job to finish. As a rule, even when out, he left the key in the lock. "You will be robbed," said Mame Bougon. "Of what?" Marius asked. It is a fact, however, that one day a pair of old boots were stolen, to the great triumph of Mame Bougon. There was a second knock, quite as gentle as the first.

"Come in," said Marius.

The door opened.

"What is the matter, Mame Bougon?" Marius continued, without taking his eyes off the books and manuscripts on his table.

A voice which was not Mame Bougon's replied, — "I beg your pardon, sir."

It was a hollow, cracked, choking voice, — the voice of an old man, rendered hoarse by dram-drinking and exposure to the cold. Marius turned sharply and noticed a girl.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER IV.

A ROSE IN WRETCHEDNESS.

A VERY young girl was standing in the half-open door. The sky-light, through which light entered, was exactly opposite the door, and threw upon this face a sallow gleam. She was a pale, wretched, fleshless creature, and had only a chemise and a petticoat upon her shivering and frozen nudity. For waist-belt she had a piece of string, for head-dress another; pointed shoulders emerged from her chemise; she was of a yellow lymphatic pallor, cadaverous collar-bones, hands red, mouth half open and degraded, with few teeth, the eye was sunken and hollow, and she had the outline of an abortive girl and the look of a corrupted old woman, or fifty years blended with fifteen. She was one of those beings who are at once weak and horrible, and who make those shudder whom they do not cause to weep.

Marius had risen, and was gazing with a species of stupor at this being, who almost resembled the shadows that traverse dreams. What was most crushing of all was, that this girl had not come into the world to be ugly, and in her childhood she must even have been pretty. The grace of youth was still struggling with the hideous and premature senility of

Digitized by Microsoft®

debauchery and poverty. A remnant of beauty was expiring on this countenance of sixteen, like the pallid sun which dies out under the frightful clouds on the dawn of a winter's day. This face was not absolutely strange to Marius, and he fancied that he had already seen it somewhere.

"What do you want, miss?" he asked.

The girl replied, with her drunken galley-slave's voice, —

"It is a letter for you, Monsieur Marius."

She addressed him by name, and hence he could not doubt but that she had business with him; but who was this girl, and how did she know his name? Without waiting for any authority, she walked in, walked in boldly, looking around her with a sort of assurance that contracted the heart, at the whole room and the unmade bed. Her feet were bare, and large holes in her petticoat displayed her long legs and thin knees. She was shivering, and held in her hand a letter, which she offered to Marius. On opening the letter, he noticed that the large, clumsy wafer was still damp, which proved that the missive had not come a long distance, and he read: —

"My amiable neighbor and young sir, — I have herd of your kindness to me, and that you paid my half-year's rent six months ago. I bless you for it, young sir. My eldest daughter will tell you that we have been without a morsel of bread for two days, — four persons, and my wife ill. If I am not deceived in my opinion, I dare to hope that your generous heart will be affected by this statement, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

will subject you to the desire to be propicious to me, by daining to lavish on me a trifling charity.

"I am, with the distinguished consideration which is due to the benefactors of humanity,

"JONDRETTE.

"P. S. My daughter will wait for your orders, my dear Monsieur Marius."

This letter, in the midst of the obscure adventure which had been troubling Marius since the previous evening, was like a candle in a cellar; all was suddenly lit up. This letter came from where the other letters came. It was the same handwriting, the same style, the same orthography, the same paper, and the same tobacco smell. They were five letters, five stories, five names, five signatures, and only one writer. The Spanish captain Don Alvarez, the unhappy mother Balizard, the dramatic author Genflot, and the old comedian Fabantou, were all four Jondrette, if, indeed, Jondrette's name were really Jondrette.

During the lengthened period that Marius had lived in this house, he had, as we stated, but rare occasions to see, or even catch a glimpse of, his very low neighbors. His mind was elsewhere, and where the mind is there is the eye. He must have passed the Jondrettes more than once in the passage and on the stairs, but they were to him merely shadows. He had paid so little attention to them, that on the previous evening he had run against the Jondrette girls on the boulevard without recognizing them, for it was evidently they, and it was with great difficulty that the girl, who had just entered the

Digitized by Microsoft®

room, aroused in him, through disgust and pity, a vague fancy that he had met her somewhere before.

Now he saw everything clearly. He comprehended that his neighbor Jondrette had hit upon the trade in his distress of working upon the charity of benevolent persons, that he procured addresses and wrote under supposititious names, to people whom he supposed to be rich and charitable, letters which his children delivered at their risk and peril, for this father had attained such a stage that he hazarded his daughters; he was gambling with destiny and staked them. Marius comprehended that, in all probability, judging from their flight of the previous evening, their panting, their terror, and the slang words he overheard, these unfortunates carried on some other dark trades, and the result of all this was, in the heart of human society such as it is constituted, two wretched beings, who were neither children, nor girls, nor women, but a species of impure and innocent monsters, which were the produce of wretchedness; melancholy beings without age, name, or sex, to whom neither good nor evil is any longer possible, and who, on emerging from childhood, have nothing left in the world, not liberty, nor virtue, nor responsibility; souls that expanded yesterday and are faded to-day, like the flowers which have fallen in the street and are plashed by the mud while waiting till a wheel crushes them.

While Marius was bending on the young girl an astonished and painful glance, she was walking about the garret with the boldness of a spectre, and without troubling herself in the slightest about her state of

Digitized by Microsoft®

audity. At some moments her unfastened and torn chemise fell almost to her waist. She moved the chairs about, disturbed the toilette articles on the chest of drawers, felt Marius's clothes, and rummaged in every corner.

"Why," she said, "you have a looking-glass!"

And she hummed, as if she had been alone, bits of vaudeville songs and wild choruses, which her guttural and hoarse voice rendered mournful. But beneath this boldness there was something constrained, alarmed, and humiliated, for effrontery is a disgrace. Nothing could well be more sad than to see her fluttering about the room with the movement of a broken-winged bird startled by a dog. It was palpable that with other conditions of education and destiny, the gay and free demeanor of this girl might have been something gentle and charming. Among animals, the creature born to be a dove is never changed into an osprey; that is only possible with men. Marius was thinking, and left her alone, and she walked up to the table.

"Ah!" she said, "books."

A gleam darted from her glassy eye: she continued, and her accent expressed the attitude of being able to boast of something to which no human creature is insensible, —

"I know how to read."

She quickly seized the book lying on the table, and read rather fluently, —

"General Bauduin received orders to carry with the five battalions of his brigade the Chateau of Hougomont, which is in the centre of the plain of Waterloo —"

Digitized by Microsoft®

She broke off.

"Ah, Waterloo, I know all about that. It was a battle in which my father was engaged, for he served in the army. We are thorough Bonapartists, we are. Waterloo was fought against the English."

She laid down the book, took up a pen, and exclaimed, "And I can write, too."

She dipped the pen in the ink, and turned to Marius, saying, —

"Would you like a proof? Stay, I will write a line to show you."

And ere he had time to answer she wrote on a sheet of white paper in the middle of the table, "*Here are the slops.*" Then throwing down the pen, she added, —

"There are no errors in spelling, as you can see, for my sister and I were well educated. We have not always been what we are now, we were not made — "

Here she stopped, fixed her glassy eye on Marius, and burst into a laugh, as she said, with an intonation which contained every possible agony, blended with every possible cynicism, —

"Bah!"

And then she began humming these words, to a lively air, —

"J'ai faim, mon père,
Pas de fricot.
J'ai froid, ma mère,
Pas de tricot.
Grelotte,
Lolotte!
Sanglote,
Jacquot!"

Digitized by Microsoft®

She had scarce completed this verse, ere she exclaimed, —

"Do you ever go to the play, Monsieur Marius? I do so. I have a brother who is a friend of the actors, and gives me tickets every now and then. I don't care for the gallery much, though, for you are so squeezed up; at times too there are noisy people there, and others who smell bad."

Then she stared at Marius, gave him a strange look, and said to him, —

"Do you know, M. Marius, that you are a very good-looking fellow!"

And at the same moment the same thought occurred to both, which made her smile and him blush. She walked up to him, and laid a hand upon his shoulder, — "You don't pay any attention to me, but I know you, M. Marius. I meet you here on the staircase, and then I see you go into the house of the one called Father Mabœuf, who lives over at Austerlitz, sometimes when I go that way. Your curly hair becomes you very well."

Her voice tried to be very soft, and only succeeded in being very low; a part of her words was lost in the passage from the larynx to the lips, as on a pianoforte some keys of which are broken. Marius had gently recoiled.

"I have a packet," he said, with his cold gravity, "which, I believe, belongs to you. Allow me to deliver it to you."

And he handed her the envelope which contained the four letters; she clapped her hands and said, —

"We looked for it everywhere."

Digitized by Microsoft®

Then she quickly seized the parcel and undid the envelope, while saying, —

"Lord of Lords! how my sister and I did look for it! And so you found it, — on the boulevard, did you not? It must have been there. You see, it was dropped while we were running, and it was my brat of a sister who was such an ass. When we got home we could not find it, and as we did not wish to be beaten, — which is unnecessary, which is entirely unnecessary, which is absolutely unnecessary, — we said at home that we had delivered the letters, and that the answer was Nix! And here are the poor letters! Well, and how did you know that they were mine? Oh, yes, by the writing. So, then, it was you that we ran against last night? We could not see anything, and I said to my sister, 'Is it a gentleman?' and she answered, 'Yes, I think it is a gentleman.'"

While saying this she had unfolded the petition addressed "To the Benevolent gentleman of the church of St. Jacques du Haut-pas."

"Hilloh!" she said, "this is the one for the old swell who goes to Mass. Why, 't is just the hour, and I will carry it to him. He will perhaps give us something for breakfast."

Then she burst into a laugh, and added, —

"Do you know what it will be if we breakfast to-day? We shall have our breakfast of the day before yesterday, our dinner of the day before yesterday, our breakfast of yesterday, our dinner of yesterday, all at once this morning. Well, hang it all! if you are not satisfied, rot, dogs!"

This reminded Marius of what the hapless girl had

Digitized by Microsoft®

come to get from him; he fumbled in his waistcoat, but found nothing. The girl went on, and seemed speaking as if no longer conscious of the presence of Marius.

"Sometimes I go out at night. Sometimes I do not come home. Before we came here last winter we lived under the arches of the bridges, and kept close together not to be frozen. My little sister cried. How sad the water is! When I thought of drowning myself, I said, 'No, it is too cold.' I go about all alone when I like, and sleep at times in ditches. Do you know, at night, when I walk along the boulevard, I see trees like forks, I see black houses as tall as the towers of Notre Dame, I fancy that the white walls are the river, and I say to myself, 'Why, there is water!' The stars are like illumination lamps, and you might say that they smoke, and the wind puts them out. I feel stunned, as if my hair was lashing my ears; however the night may be, I hear barrel-organs and spinning machinery, but what do I know? I fancy that stones are being thrown at me, and I run away unconsciously, for all turns round me. When you have not eaten it is funny."

And she gazed at him with haggard eyes.

After feeling in the depths of all his pockets, Marius succeeded in getting together five francs sixteen sous; it was at this moment all that he possessed in the world. "Here is my to-day's dinner," he thought, "and to-morrow will take care of itself." He kept the sixteen sous, and gave the girl the five-franc piece, which she eagerly clutched.

"Good!" she said, "there is sunshine."

Digitized by Microsoft®

And, as if the sunshine had the property of melting in her brain avalanches of slang, she went on, —

"Five francs! a shiner! a monarch! in this crib! that 's stunning! Well, you 're a nice kid, and I do the humble to you. Two days' drink and a bully feed, — a feast; we 're well fixed. Hurrah, pals!"

She pulled her chemise up over her shoulders, gave Marius a deep courtesy and a familiar wave of the hand, and walked toward the door, saying, —

"Good day, sir; but no matter, I 'll go and find my old swell."

As she passed she noticed on the drawers an old crust of dry bread mouldering in the dust; she caught it up, and bit into it savagely, grumbling, —

"It is good, it is hard; it breaks my teeth!"

Then she left the room.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER V.

A PROVIDENTIAL PEEP-HOLE.

MARIUS had lived for the past five years in poverty, want, and even distress, but he now saw that he had never known what real misery was, and he had just witnessed it; it was the phantom which had just passed before him. For, in truth, he who has only seen man's misery has seen nothing, he must see woman's misery; while he who has seen woman's misery has seen nothing, for he must see the misery of the child. When man has reached the last extremity he has also reached the limit of his resources; and then, woe to the defenceless beings that surround him! Work, wages, bread, fire, courage, and food will all fail him at once; the light of day seems extinguished outside, the moral light is extinguished within him. In these shadows man comes across the weakness of the wife and the child, and violently bends them to ignominy.

In such a case every horror is possible, and despair is surrounded by thin partitions which all open upon vice and crime. Health, youth, honor, the sacred and retiring delicacy of the still innocent flesh, the heart-virginity and modesty, that epidermis of the soul, are foully clutched by this groping hand,

Digitized by Microsoft®

which seeks resources, finds opprobrium, and puts up with it.

Fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, men, women, and girls, adhere and are aggregated almost like a mineral formation in this misty promiscuity of sexes, relations, ages, infamies, and innocencies. Leaning against each other, they crouch in a species of den of destiny, and look at each other lamentably. Oh, the unfortunates! how pale they are! how cold they are! It seems as if they belong to a planet much farther from the sun than our own.

This girl was to Marius a sort of emissary from the darkness, and she revealed to him a hideous side of night. Marius almost reproached himself for the preoccupations of reverie and passion which, up to this day, had prevented him from taking a glance at his neighbors. To have paid their rent was a mechanical impulse, which any one might have had; but he, Marius, ought to have done better. What, only a wall separated himself from these abandoned creatures, who lived groping in night, beyond the pale of other living beings! He elbowed them, he was to some extent the last link of the human race which they could touch; he heard them living, or rather dying, by his side, and he paid no attention to them! Every moment of the day he heard them, through the wall, coming, going, and talking — and he did not listen! and in their words were groans, and he did not hear them! His thoughts were elsewhere, — engaged with dreams, impossible sunbeams, loves in the air, and follies; and yet, human creatures, his brethren in Christ, his brethren in the

Digitized by Microsoft®

people, were slowly dying by his side, dying unnecessarily! He even formed part of their misfortune, and he aggravated it. For, if they had had another neighbor, a neighbor more attentive, less chimerical, an ordinary and charitable man, their indigence would evidently have been noticed, their signals of distress perceived, and they might perhaps have been picked up and saved long before. They doubtless seemed very depraved, very corrupt, very vile, and indeed very odious; but persons who fall without being degraded are rare; besides, there is a stage where the unfortunate and the infamous are mingled and confounded in one word, — a fatal word, "Les Misérables," and with whom lies the fault? And then, again, should not the charity be the greater the deeper the fall is?

While reading himself this lecture, — for there were occasions on which Marius was his own pedagogue, and reproached himself more than he deserved, — he looked at the wall which separated him from the Jondrettes, as if his pitying glance could pass through the partition and warm the unhappy beings. The wall was a thin coating of plaster supported by laths and beams, and which, as we have stated, allowed the murmurs of words and voices to be distinctly heard. A man must be a dreamer like Marius not to have noticed the fact before. No paper was hung on either side of the wall, and its clumsy construction was plainly visible. Almost unconsciously Marius examined this partition; for at times reverie examines, scrutinizes, and observes much as thought does. All at once he rose, for he

Digitized by Microsoft®

had just noticed near the ceiling a triangular hole produced by the gap between three laths. The plaster which once covered this hole had fallen off, and by getting on his chest of drawers he could see through this aperture into the room of the Jondrettes. Commiseration has, and should have, its curiosity, and it is permissible to regard misfortune traitorously when we wish to relieve it. "Let me see," thought Marius, "what these people are like, and what state they are in." He clambered on the drawers, put his eye to the hole, and looked.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VI.

THE WILD-BEAST MAN IN HIS LAIR.

Cities, like forests, have their dens, in which everything that is most wicked and formidable conceals itself. The only difference is, that what hides itself thus in cities is ferocious, unclean, and little, that is to say, ugly; what conceals itself in the forests is ferocious, savage, and grand, that is to say, beautiful. Den for den, those of the beasts are preferable to those of men; and caverns are better than hiding-places. What Marius saw was a low den. Marius was poor, and his room was indigent; but in the same way as his poverty was noble his room was clean. The garret into which he was now looking was abject, dirty, fetid, infectious, dark, and sordid. The furniture only consisted of a straw-bottomed chair, a rickety table, some old broken glass, and in the corners two indescribable beds. The only light came through a sky-light with four panes of glass and festooned with spider-webs. Through this came just sufficient light for the face of a man to seem the face of a spectre. The walls had a leprous look, and were covered with gashes and scars, like a face disfigured by some horrible disease, and a dim moisture oozed from them. Ob-

Digitized by Microsoft®

scene designs, clumsily drawn in charcoal, could be distinguished on them.

The room which Marius occupied had a broken-brick flooring, but in this one people walked on the old plaster of the hovel, grown black under the feet. Upon this uneven flooring, in which the dust was, so to speak, incrusted, and which had but one virginity, that of the broom, were capriciously grouped constellations of old shoes, boots, and frightful rags; this room, however, had a chimney, and for this reason was let at forty francs a year. There was something of everything in this fire-place,—a chafing-dish, a pot, some broken planks, rags hanging from nails, a bird-cage, ashes, and even a little fire, for two logs were smoking there sadly. A thing which augmented the horror of this garret was the fact of its being large; it had angles, nooks, black holes under the roof, bays, and promontories. Hence came frightful inscrutable corners, in which it seemed as if spiders large as a fist, woodlice as large as a foot, and possibly some human monsters, must lurk.

One of the beds was near the door, the other near the window, but the ends of both ran down to the mantel-piece, and faced Marius. In a corner near the hole through which Marius was peeping, a colored engraving in a black wood frame, under which was written in large letters, THE DREAM, hung against the wall. It represented a sleeping woman and a sleeping child, the child lying on the woman's knees, an eagle in the clouds with a crown in its beak, and the woman removing the crown from the child's head, without awaking it, however; in the

Digitized by Microsoft®

background Napoleon, surrounded by a glory, was leaning against a dark blue column with a yellow capital, that bore the following inscription: —

MARINGO
AUSTERLITS
IENA
WAGRAMME
ELOT

Below this frame a sort of wooden panel, longer than it was wide, was placed on the ground and leaning against the wall. It looked like a picture turned from the spectator, or some sign-board detached from a wall and forgotten there while waiting to be hung again. At the table, on which Marius noticed pen, ink, and paper, a man was seated of about sixty years of age, short, thin, livid, haggard, with a sharp, cruel, and listless look, — a hideous scamp. If Lavater had examined this face he would have found in it the vulture blended with the attorney's clerk; the bird of prey and the man of trickery rendering each other more ugly and more perfect, — the man of trickery rendering the bird of prey ignoble, and the bird of prey rendering the man of trickery horrible. This man had a long gray beard, and wore a woman's chemise, which allowed his hairy chest, and naked arms bristling with gray hairs, to be seen. Under this chemise might be noticed muddy trousers, and boots out of which his toes stuck. He had a pipe in his mouth, and was smoking; there was no bread in the garret, but there was still tobacco. He was writing, probably some letter like those which

Digitized by Microsoft®

Marius had read. On one corner of the table could be seen an old broken-backed volume, the form of which, the old 12mo of circulating libraries, indicated a romance; on the cover figured the following title, printed in large capitals, — God, the King, Honor, and the Ladies. By Ducray Duminil, 1814. While writing, the man was talking aloud, and Marius heard his words: —

"Only to think that there is no equality, even when a man is dead! Just look at Père Lachaise! The great ones, those who are rich, are up above, in the Acacia Avenue which is paved, and reach it in a coach. The little folk, the poor people, the wretched, — they are put down at the bottom where there is mud up to your knees, in holes and damp, and they are placed there that they may rot all the sooner. You can't go to see them without sinking into the ground."

Here he stopped, smote the table with his fist, and added, while he gnashed his teeth, —

"Oh! I could eat the world!"

A stout woman, who might be forty or one hundred, was crouched up near the chimney-piece on her naked heels. She too was only dressed in a chemise and a cotton petticoat, pieced with patches of old cloth, and an apron of coarse canvas concealed one half of the petticoat. Though this woman was sitting all of a heap, you could see that she was very tall, and a species of giantess by her husband's side. She had frightful hair, of a reddish auburn, beginning to turn gray, which she thrust back every now and then with the enormous strong

Digitized by Microsoft®

hands with flat nails. By her side, on the ground, was lying an open volume, of the same form as the other, probably part of the same romance. On one of the beds Marius caught a glimpse of a long, ghastly young girl, sitting up almost naked, and with hanging feet, who did not seem to hear, see, or live; she was, doubtless, the younger sister of the one who had come to him. She appeared to be eleven or twelve years of age, but on examining her attentively it could be seen that she was at least fourteen; it was the girl who said on the boulevard the previous night, "I bolted, bolted, bolted." She was of that sickly class who keep down for a long time and then shoot up quickly and suddenly. It is indigence which produces these human plants, and these creatures have neither infancy nor adolescence. At fifteen they seem twelve, and at sixteen they appear twenty: to-day it is a little girl, to-morrow a woman; we might almost say that they stride through life in order to reach the end more rapidly; at this moment, however, she had the look of a child.

In this lodging there was not the slightest sign of work; not a loom, a spinning-wheel, or a single tool, but in one corner were some iron implements of dubious appearance. It was that dull indolence which follows despair and precedes death. Marius gazed for some time at this mournful interior, which was more terrifying than the interior of a tomb, for the human soul could be seen stirring in it and life palpitating. The garret, the cellar, the hole in which some indigent people crawl in the lowest part of the

Digitized by Microsoft®

social edifice, is not exactly the sepulchre, but it is the antechamber to it; but like those rich men who display their greatest magnificence at the entrance to their palace, it seems that death, which is close at hand, places all its greatest wretchedness in this vestibule. The man was silent, the woman did not speak, and the girl did not seem to breathe; the pen could be heard moving across the paper. The man growled, without ceasing to write, "Scoundrels, scoundrels, all are scoundrels!"

The variation upon Solomon's exclamation drew a sigh from the wife.

"Calm yourself, my love," she said, "do not hurt yourself, darling. You are too good to write to all those people, dear husband."

In misery bodies draw more closely together, as in cold weather, but hearts are estranged. This woman, to all appearance, must have loved this man with the amount of love within her, but probably this had been extinguished in the daily and mutual reproaches of the frightful distress that pressed upon the whole family, and she now had only the ashes of affection for her husband within her. Still, caressing appellations, as frequently happens, had survived: she called him *darling*, *pet*, *husband*, with her lips, but her heart was silent. The man continued to write.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VII.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS.

Marius, with an aching heart, was just going to descend from the species of observatory which he had improvised, when a noise attracted his attention and made him remain at his post. The door of the garret was suddenly opened, and the elder daughter appeared on the threshold. She had on her feet clumsy men's shoes covered with mud, which had even plashed her red ankles, and she was covered with an old ragged cloak, which Marius had not noticed an hour previously, and which she had probably left at his door in order to inspire greater sympathy, and put on again when she went out. She came in, shut the door after her, stopped to catch breath, for she was panting, and then cried, with an expression of triumph and joy, —

"He is coming!"

The father turned his eyes to her, the mother turned her head, and the little girl did not move.

"Who?" the father asked.

"The gentleman."

"The philanthropist?"

"Yes."

"From the church of St. Jacques?"

"Yes. He is following me."

Digitized by Microsoft®

"Are you sure?"

"He is coming in a hackney coach, I tell you."

"A hackney coach! Why, it is Rothschild!"

The father rose.

"Why are you sure? If he is coming in a coach, how is it that you got here before him? Did you give him the address, and are you certain you told him the last door on the right in the passage? I only hope he will not make a mistake. Did you find him at church? Did he read my letter, and what did he say to you?"

"Ta, ta, ta," said the girl, "how you gallop, my good man! I went into the church, he was at his usual place; I made a courtesy and handed him the letter; he read it, and said to me, 'Where do you live, my child?' I said, 'I will show you the way, sir;' he said, 'No, give me your address, for my daughter has some purchases to make. I will take a hackney coach, and be at your abode as soon as you.' I gave him the address, and when I mentioned the house he seemed surprised, and hesitated for a moment, but then said, 'No matter, I will go.' When Mass was over I saw him leave the church and get into a coach with his daughter. And I carefully told him the last door on the right at the end of the passage."

"And what tells you that he will come?"

"I have just seen the coach turn into the Rue du Petit Banquier, and that is why I ran."

"How do you know it is the same coach?"

"Because I noticed the number, of course."

"What was it?"

"Four hundred and forty."

Digitized by Microsoft®

"Good! you are a clever girl."

The girl looked boldly at her father, and said, as she pointed to the shoes on her feet, —

"It is possible that I am a clever girl; but I say that I will not put on those shoes again; in the first place, on account of my health, and secondly, for the sake of decency. I know nothing more annoying than shoes which are too big for you, and go ghi, ghi, ghi, along the road. I would sooner be barefooted."

"You are right," the father replied, in a gentle voice, which contrasted with the girl's rudeness; "but the poor are not admitted into churches unless they wear shoes; God's presence must not be entered barefoot," he added bitterly. Then he returned to the object that occupied him.

"And so you are sure that he will come?"

"He is at my heels," she replied.

The man drew himself up, and there was a species of illumination on his face.

"Wife," he cried, "you hear! Here is the philanthropist; put out the fire."

The stupefied mother did not stir, but the father, with the agility of a mountebank, seized the cracked pot, which stood on the chimney-piece, and threw water on the logs. Then he said to his elder daughter, —

"Pull the straw out of the chair."

As his daughter did not understand him, he seized the chair and kicked the seat out; his leg passed through it, and while drawing it out, he asked the girl, —

Digitized by Microsoft®

"Is it cold?"

"Very cold; it is snowing."

The father turned to the younger girl, who was on the bed near the window, and shouted in a thundering voice,—

"Come off the bed directly, idler; you never will do anything: break a pane of glass!"

The little girl jumped off the bed, shivering.

"Break a pane!" he continued.

The girl was quite stunned, and did not move.

"Do you hear me?" the father repeated; "I tell you to break a pane."

The child, with a sort of terrified obedience, stood on tip-toe and broke a pane with her fist; the glass fell with a great crash.

"All right!" said the father.

He was serious and active, and his eye rapidly surveyed every corner of the garret; he was like a general who makes his final preparations at the moment when an action is about to begin. The mother, who had not yet said a word, rose and asked in a slow, dull voice, the words seeming to issue as if frozen,—

"Darling, what do you intend to do?"

"Go to bed!" the man replied.

The tone admitted of no deliberation, the mother obeyed, and threw herself heavily on one of the beds. A sobbing was now audible in a corner.

"What is that?" the father cried.

The younger girl, without leaving the gloom in which she was crouching, showed her bleeding hand. In breaking the glass she had cut herself; she had crawled close to her mother's bed, and was now

Digitized by Microsoft®

crying silently. It was the mother's turn to draw herself up and cry: —

"You see what nonsensical acts you commit! She has cut herself in breaking the window."

"All the better," said the man; "I expected it."

"How all the better?" the woman continued.

"Silence!" the father replied. "I suppress the liberty of the press."

Then, tearing the chemise which he wore, he made a bandage, with which he quickly wrapped up the girl's bleeding hand; this done, his eye settled on the torn shirt with satisfaction.

"And the shirt too!" he said; "all this looks well."

An icy blast blew through the pane and entered the room. The external fog penetrated it, and dilated like a white wadding pulled open by invisible fingers. The snow could be seen falling through the broken pane, and the cold promised by the Candlemas sun had really arrived. The father took a look around him, as if to make sure that he had forgotten nothing, then he fetched an old shovel and strewed the ashes over the wet logs so as to conceal them entirely. Then getting up and leaning against the chimney-piece, he said, —

"Now we can receive the philanthropist."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VIII.

A SUNBEAM IN THE GARRET.

THE elder girl walked up to her father and laid her hand in his.

"Just feel how cold I am!" she said.

"Stuff!" the father answered; "I am much colder than that."

The mother cried impetuously, —

"You always have everything more than others, even evil."

"Off with you!" said the man.

The mother, looked at by him in a certain way, held her tongue, and there was a momentary silence in the den. The elder girl was carelessly removing the mud from the edge of her cloak, and her younger sister continued to sob. The mother had taken her head between her hands, and covered it with kisses, while whispering, —

"Pray do not go on so, my treasure; it will be nothing, so don't cry, or you will vex your father."

"No," the father cried, "on the contrary, sob away, for that does good."

Then he turned to the elder girl, —

"Why, he is not coming! Suppose he were not to come! I should have broken my pane, put out my fire, unseated my chair, and torn my shirt all for nothing."

Digitized by Microsoft®

"And hurt the little one," the mother murmured.

"Do you know," the father continued, "that it is infernally cold in this devil's own garret? Suppose the man did not come! But no, he is keeping us waiting, and says to himself, 'Well, they will wait my pleasure, they are sent into the world for that!' Oh, how I hate the rich, and with what joy, jubilation, enthusiasm, and satisfaction would I strangle them all! All the rich, I say, — those pretended charitable men who play the devout, attend Mass, keep in with the priests and believe themselves above us, and who come to humiliate us and bring us clothes! How they talk! They bring us old rubbish not worth four sous, and bread; but it is not *that* I want, you pack of scoundrels, but money. Ah, money! Never! because they say that we would go and drink, and that we are drunkards and idlers. And they — what are they, pray, and what have they been in their time? Thieves, for they could not have grown rich without that. Oh, society ought to be taken by the four corners of a table-cloth and the whole lot thrown into the air! All would be broken, very possibly, but at any rate no one would have anything, and that would be so much gained! But what is your humbug of a benevolent gentleman about? Will he come? Perhaps the ass has forgotten the address. I will bet that the old brute — "

At this moment there was a gentle tap at the door; the man rushed forward and opened it, while exclaiming with deep bows and smiles of adoration, —

Digitized by Microsoft®

"Come in, sir; deign to enter, my respected benefactor, as well as your charming daughter."

A man of middle age and a young lady stood in the doorway; Marius had not left his post, and what he felt at this moment is beyond the human tongue.

It was SHE; and any one who has loved knows the radiant meaning conveyed in the three letters that form the word SHE. It was certainly she, though Marius could hardly distinguish her through the luminous vapor which had suddenly spread over his eyes. It was the gentle creature he had lost, the star which had gleamed on him for six months; it was the forehead, the mouth, — the lovely mouth which had produced night by departing. The eclipse was over, and she now reappeared, — reappeared in this darkness, in this attic, in this filthy den, in this horror. Marius trembled. What! it was she! The palpitation of his heart affected his sight, and he felt ready to burst into tears. What! he saw her again after seeking her so long! It seemed to him as if he had lost his soul and had just found it again. She was still the same, though perhaps a little paler; her delicate face was framed in a violet velvet bonnet, and her waist was hidden by a black satin pelisse; a glimpse of her little foot in a silk boot could be caught under her long dress. She was accompanied by M. Leblanc, and she walked into the room and placed a rather large parcel on the table. The elder girl had withdrawn behind the door, and looked with a jealous eye at the velvet bonnet, the satin pelisse, and the charming, happy face.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER IX.

JONDRETTE ALMOST CRIES.

THE garret was so dark that persons who came into it felt much as if they were going into a cellar. The two new-comers, therefore, advanced with some degree of hesitation, scarce distinguishing the vague forms around them, while they were perfectly seen and examined by the eyes of the denizens in the attic, who were accustomed to this gloom. M. Leblanc walked up to Father Jondrette, with his sad and gentle smile, and said, —

"You will find in this parcel, sir, new apparel, woollen stockings, and blankets."

"Our angelic benefactor overwhelms us," Jondrette said, bowing to the ground; then, bending down to the ear of his elder daughter, he added in a hurried whisper, while the two visitors were examining this lamentable interior, —

"Did I not say so, — clothes, but no money? They are all alike. By the way, how was the letter to the old ass signed?"

"Fabantou."

"The actor, — all right."

It was lucky that Jondrette asked this, for at the same moment M. Leblanc turned to him, and said

Digitized by Microsoft®

with the air of a person who is trying to remember the name, —

"I see that you are much to be pitied, Monsieur —"

"Fabantou," Jondrette quicky added.

"Monsieur Fabantou; yes, that is it, I remember."

"An actor, sir, who has been successful in his time."

Here Jondrette evidently believed the moment arrived to trap his philanthropist, and he shouted in a voice which had some of the bombast of the country showman, and the humility of the professional beggar, — "A pupil of Talma, sir! I am a pupil of Talma! Fortune smiled upon me formerly, but now, alas! the turn of misfortune has arrived. You see, my benefactor, we have no bread, no fire. My poor children have no fire. My sole chair without a seat! a pane of glass broken, in such weather as this! my wife in bed, ill!"

"Poor woman!" said M. Leblanc.

"My child hurt," Jondrette added.

The child, distracted by the arrival of the strangers, was staring at the "young lady," and ceased sobbing.

"Cry, I tell you; roar!" Jondrette whispered to her. At the same time he squeezed her bad hand. All this was done with the talent of a conjurer. The little one uttered piercing cries, and the adorable girl whom Marius called in his heart "his Ursule," eagerly went up to her.

"Poor dear child!" she said.

"You see, respected young lady," Jondrette continued, "her hand is bleeding. It is the result of an accident which happened to her while working

Digitized by Microsoft®

at a factory to earn six sous a day. It is possible that her arm will have to be cut off."

"Really?" the old gentleman said in alarm.

The little girl, taking this remark seriously, began sobbing again her loudest.

"Alas, yes, my benefactor!" the father answered.

For some minutes past Jondrette had been looking at the "philanthropist" in a peculiar way, and while speaking seemed to be scrutinizing him attentively, as if trying to collect his remembrances. All at once, profiting by a moment during which the new-comers were questioning the little girl about her injured hand, he passed close to his wife, who was lying in her bed with a surprised and stupid air, and said to her in a hurried whisper, —

"Look at that man!"

Then he turned to M. Leblanc, and continued his lamentations.

"Look, sir! my sole clothing consists of a chemise of my wife's, all torn, in the heart of winter. I cannot go out for want of a coat, and if I had the smallest bit of a coat I would go and call on Mademoiselle Mars, who knows me, and is much attached to me. Does she still live in the Rue de la Tour des Dames? Do you know, sir, that we played together in the provinces, and that I shared her laurels? Célimène would come to my help, sir, and Elmire give alms to Belisarius. But no, nothing, and not a halfpenny piece in the house! my wife ill, — not a sou! my daughter dangerously injured, — not a sou! My wife suffers from shortness of breath; it comes from her age, and then the nervous system

Digitized by Microsoft®

is mixed up in it. She requires assistance, and so does my daughter. But the physician and the apothecary, how are they to be paid if I have not a farthing? I would kneel down before a penny, sir. You see to what the arts are reduced! And do you know, my charming young lady, and you my generous protector, who exhale virtue and goodness, and who perfume the church where my poor child sees you daily when she goes to say her prayers, — for I am bringing up my daughters religiously, sir, and did not wish them to turn to the stage. Ah, the jades, let me see them trip! I do not jest, sir; I give them lectures on honor, morality, and virtue. Just ask them, — they must go straight, — for they have a father. They are not wretched girls who begin by having no family, and finish by marrying the public. Such a girl is Miss Nobody, and becomes Madame All-the-World. There must be nothing of that sort in the Fabantou family! I intend to educate them virtuously, and they must be respectable, and honest, and believe in God, — confound it! Well, sir, worthy sir, do you know what will happen to-morrow? To-morrow is the fatal 4th of February, the last respite my landlord has granted me, and if I do not pay my rent by to-night, my eldest daughter, myself, my wife with her fever, my child with her wound, will be all four of us turned out of here into the street, shelterless in the rain and snow. That is the state of the case, sir! I owe four quarters, — a year's rent, — that is to say, sixty francs."

Jondrette lied, for four quarters would only have been forty francs, and he could not owe four, as it

Digitized by Microsoft®

was not six months since Marius had paid two for him. M. Leblanc took a five-franc piece from his pocket and threw it on the table. Jondrette had time to growl in his grown-up daughter's ear, —

"The scamp! what does he expect me to do with his five francs? They will not pay for the chair and pane of glass! There's the result of making an outlay!"

In the mean while M. Leblanc had taken off a heavy brown coat, which he wore over his blue one, and thrown it on the back of a chair.

"Monsieur Fabantou," he said, "I have only these five francs about me, but I will take my daughter home and return to-night. Is it not to-night that you have to pay?"

Jondrette's face was lit up with a strange expression, and he hurriedly answered, —

"Yes, respected sir, I must be with my landlord by eight o'clock."

"I will be here by six, and bring you the sixty francs."

"My benefactor!" Jondrette exclaimed wildly; and he added in a whisper, —

"Look at him carefully, wife."

M. Leblanc had given his arm to the lovely young lady, and was turning to the door.

"Till this evening, my friends," he said.

"At six o'clock?" Jondrette asked.

"At six o'clock precisely."

At this moment the overcoat left on the back of the chair caught the eye of the elder girl.

"Sir," she said, "you are forgetting your great-coat."

Digitized by Microsoft®

Jondrette gave his daughter a crushing glance, accompanied by a formidable shrug of the shoulders, but M. Leblanc turned and replied smilingly, —

"I do not forget it, I leave it."

"Oh, my protector," said Jondrette, "my august benefactor, I am melting into tears! Permit me to conduct you to your coach."

"If you go out," M. Leblanc remarked, "put on that overcoat, for it is really very cold."

Jondrette did not let this be said twice, but eagerly put on the brown coat. Then they all three went out, Jondrette preceding the two strangers.

Digitized by Microsoft ®

CHAPTER X.

THE TARIFF OF CAB-FARES.

MARIUS had lost nothing of all this scene, and yet in reality he had seen nothing. His eyes remained fixed on the maiden, his heart had, so to speak, seized and entirely enfolded her from her first step into the garret. During the whole time she had been there he had lived that life of ecstasy which suspends material perceptions and concentrates the whole mind upon one point. He contemplated not the girl, but the radiance which was dressed in a satin pelisse and a velvet bonnet. Had the planet Sirius entered the room he would not have been more dazzled. While she was opening the parcel, and unfolding the clothes and blankets, questioning the sick mother kindly, and the little wounded girl tenderly, he watched her every movement, and tried to hear her words. Though he knew her eyes, her forehead, her beauty, her waist, and her walk, he did not know the sound of her voice. He fancied that he had caught a few words once at the Luxembourg, but he was not absolutely sure. He would have given ten years of his life to hear her, and to carry off in his soul a little of this music; but all was lost in the lamentable braying of Jondrette's trumpet.

Digitized by Microsoft®

This mingled a real anger with Marius's ravishment, and he devoured her with his eyes, for he could not imagine that it was really this divine creature whom he perceived among these unclean beings in this monstrous den; he fancied that he saw a humming-bird among frogs.

When she left the room he had but one thought, — to follow her, to attach himself to her trail, not to leave her till he knew where she lived, or at least not to lose her again after having so miraculously found her. He leaped off the drawers, and seized his hat, but just as he laid his hand on the latch and was going out a reflection arrested him; the passage was long, the staircase steep, Jondrette chattering, and M. Leblanc had doubtless not yet got into his coach again. If, turning in the passage or on the stairs, he were to perceive him, Marius, in this house, he would assuredly be alarmed, and find means to escape him again, and so all would be over for the second time. What was to be done, — wait awhile? But during this delay the vehicle might start off. Marius was perplexed, but at length risked it, and left the room. There was no one in the passage, and he ran to the stairs, and as there was no one upon them he hurried down and reached the boulevard just in time to see a hackney coach turning the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier, on its road to Paris.

Marius rushed in that direction, and on reaching the corner of the boulevard saw the hackney coach again rapidly rolling along the Rue Mouffetard; it was already some distance off, and he had no means of overtaking it. Running after it was an impossi-

Digitized by Microsoft®

bility; and besides, a man running at full speed after the vehicle would be seen from it, and the father would recognize him. At this moment, by an extraordinary and marvellous accident, Marius perceived a cab passing along the boulevard, empty. There was only one thing to be done, — get into this cab and follow the hackney coach; that was sure, efficacious, and without danger. Marius made the driver a sign to stop, and shouted to him, "By the hour!" Marius had no cravat on, he wore his old working coat, from which buttons were missing, and one of the plaits of his shirt was torn. The driver stopped, winked, and held out to Marius his left hand as he gently rubbed his forefinger with his thumb.

"What do you mean?" Marius asked.

"Payment in advance," said the coachman.

Marius remembered that he had only sixteen sous in his pocket.

"How much is it?"

"Forty sous."

"I will pay on returning."

The driver, in reply, whistled the air of La Palisse, and lashed his horse. Marius watched the cab go off with a haggard look; for the want of twenty-four sous he lost his joy, his happiness, his love! He fell back into night! He had seen, and was becoming blind again. He thought bitterly, and, we must add, with deep regret, of the five francs which he had given that very morning to the wretched girl. If he still had them, he would be saved, would emerge from limbo and darkness, and be drawn from isolation, spleen, and widowhood; he would have reattached

Digitized by Microsoft®

the black thread of his destiny to the beauteous golden thread which had just floated before his eyes only to be broken again! He returned to his garret in despair. He might have said to himself that M. Leblanc had promised to return that evening, and that then he must contrive to follow him better; but in his contemplation he had scarce heard him.

Just as he was going up the stairs he noticed on the other side of the wall, and against the deserted wall of the Rue de la Barrière des Gobelins, Jondrette, wrapped up in the "philanthropist's" overcoat, and conversing with one of those ill-looking men who are usually called prowlers at the barrière; men with equivocal faces and suspicious soliloquies, who look as if they entertain evil thoughts, and most usually sleep by day, which leads to the supposition that they work at night. These two men, standing to talk in the snow, which was falling heavily, formed a group which a policeman would certainly have observed, but which Marius scarce noticed. Still, though his preoccupation was so painful, he could not help saying to himself that the man to whom Jondrette was talking was like a certain Panchaud, *alias* Printanier, *alias* Bigrenaille, whom Courfeyrac had once pointed out to him, and who was regarded in the quarter as a very dangerous night-bird. This Panchaud afterwards figured in several criminal trials, and eventually became a celebrated villain, though at this time he was only a famous villain. At the present day he is in a traditionary state among the bandits and burglars. He was the model toward the end of the last reign, and people used to talk about

Digitized by Microsoft®

him in the Lion's den at La Force, at nightfall, at the hour when groups assemble and converse in whispers. In this prison, and at the exact spot where the sewer, which served as the way of escape for the thirty prisoners in 1843, opened, this name, PANCHAUD, might be seen daringly cut in the wall over the sewer, in one of his attempted escapes. In 1832 the police already had their eye on him, but he had not yet fairly made a start.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XI.

WRETCHEDNESS OFFERS HELP TO SORROW.

Marius ascended the stairs slowly, and at the moment when he was going to enter his cell he perceived behind him, in the passage, the elder of Jondrette's girls following him. This girl was odious in his sight, for it was she who had his five francs; but it was too late to ask them back from her, for both the hackney coach and the cab were now far away. Besides, she would not return them to him. As for questioning her about the abode of the persons who had been here just now, that was useless, and it was plain that she did not know, for the letter signed Fabantou was addressed "To the benevolent gentleman of the church of St. Jacques du Haut-pas." Marius went into his room and threw the door to after him, but it did not close; he turned and saw a hand in the aperture.

"Who 's that?" he asked.

It was the girl.

"Oh it 's you!" Marius continued almost harshly, —"always you! What do you want of me?"

She seemed thoughtful, and made no answer, and she no longer had her boldness of the morning; she did not come in, but stood in the dark passage,

Digitized by Microsoft®

where Marius perceived her through the half-open door.

"Well, answer!" said Marius; "what do you want of me?"

She raised her dull eye, in which a sort of lustre seemed to be vaguely illumined, and said, —

"Monsieur Marius, you look sad; what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

"Yes, there is!"

"Leave me alone!"

Marius pushed the door again, but she still held it.

"Stay," she said; "you are wrong. Though you are not rich, you were kind this morning, and be so again now. You gave me food, and now tell me what is the matter with you. It is easy to see that you are in sorrow, and I do not wish you to be so. What can I do to prevent it, and can I be of any service to you? Employ me; I do not ask for your secrets, and you need not tell them to me, but I may be of use to you. Surely I can help you, as I help my father. When there are any letters to deliver, or any address to be found by following people, or asking from door to door, I am employed. Well, you can tell me what is the matter with you, and I will go and speak to persons. Now and then it is sufficient for some one to speak to persons in order to find out things, and all is arranged. Employ me."

An idea crossed Marius's mind, for no branch is despised when we feel ourselves falling. He walked up to the girl.

Digitized by Microsoft®

"Listen to me," he said; "you brought an old gentleman and his daughter here."

"Yes."

"Do you know their address?"

"No."

"Find it for me."

The girl's eye, which was dull, had become joyous, but now it became gloomy.

"Is that what you want?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Do you know them?"

"No."

"That is to say," she added quickly, "you don't know her, but you would like to know her."

This "them," which became "her," had something most significant and bitter about it.

"Well, can you do it?" Marius said.

"You shall have the beautiful young lady's address."

In these words there was again a meaning which annoyed Marius, so he went on, —

"Well, no matter! the father and daughter's address, — their address, I say."

She looked at him fixedly.

"What will you give me for it?"

"Whatever you like."

"Whatever I like? You shall have the address."

She hung her head, and then closed the door with a hurried gesture; Marius was alone again. He fell into a chair, with his head and elbows on his bed, sunk in thoughts which he could not grasp, and suffering from a dizziness. All that had happened since

Digitized by Microsoft®

the morning, — the apparition of the angel, her disappearance, and what this creature had just said to him, a gleam of hope floating in an immense despair, — this is what confusedly filled his brain. All at once he was violently dragged out of his reverie, for he heard Jondrette's loud, hard voice uttering words full of the strangest interest for him.

"I tell you that I am sure, and that I recognized him."

Of whom was Jondrette talking, and whom had he recognized? M. Leblanc, the father of "his Ursule." What! did Jondrette know him? Was Marius going to obtain, in this sudden and unexpected fashion, all the information without which his life was obscure for himself? Was he at last going to know who she was whom he loved, and who her father was? Was the thick cloud that covered them on the point of clearing off? Would the veil be rent asunder? Oh, heavens! He bounded rather than ascended upon the chest of drawers and resumed his place at the aperture in the partition: once more he saw the interior of Jondrette's den.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XII.

THE USE OF M. LEBLANC'S FIVE-FRANC PIECE.

THERE was no change in the appearance of the family, save that mother and daughters had put on stockings and flannel waistcoats taken out of the parcel, and two new blankets were thrown on the beds. The man had evidently just returned, for he was out of breath; his daughters were seated near the chimney-piece on the ground, the elder tying up the younger's hand. The mother was crouching on the bed near the fire-place, with an astonished face, while Jondrette was walking up and down the room with long strides and extraordinary eyes. The woman, who seemed frightened and struck with stupor before him, ventured to say, —

"What, really, are you sure?"

"Sure! it is eight years ago, but I can recognize him! I recognized him at once. What! did it not strike you?"

"No."

"And yet I said to you, 'Pay attention!' Why, it is his figure, his face, very little older, — for there are some people who never age, though I do not know how they manage it, — and the sound of his voice. He is better dressed, that 's all! Ah! you mysterious old villain, I hold you!"

Digitized by Microsoft®

He stopped and said to his daughters, —

"Be off, you two! — It is funny that it did not strike you."

They rose to obey, and the mother stammered, —

"With her bad hand?"

"The air will do it good," said Jondrette. "Off with you!"

It was evident that this man was one of those who are not answered. The girls went out, but just as they passed the door the father clutched the elder by the arm, and said, with a peculiar accent, —

"You will be here at five o'clock precisely, both of you, for I shall want you."

Marius redoubled his attention. When left alone with his wife, Jondrette began walking up and down the room again, and took two or three turns in silence. Then he spent several minutes thrusting the tail of the chemise which he wore into his trousers. All at once he turned to his wife, folded his arms, and exclaimed, —

"And shall I tell you something? The young lady —"

"Well, what?" the wife retorted.

Marius could not doubt, they were really talking about her. He listened with ardent anxiety, and all his life was in his ears. But Jondrette had stooped down, and was whispering to his wife. Then he rose, and ended aloud, —

"It is she."

"That one?" the wife asked.

"That one!" said the husband.

No expression could render all there was in the

Digitized by Microsoft®

mother's *that one;* it was surprise, rage, hatred, and passion mingled and combined in a monstrous intonation. A few words, doubtless a name which her husband whispered in her ear, were sufficient to arouse this fat, crushed woman, and to make her more than repulsive and frightful.

"It is not possible," she exclaimed; "when I think that my daughters go about barefooted, and have not a gown to put on! What! a satin pelisse, a velvet bonnet, clothes worth more than two hundred francs, so that you might take her for a lady! No, you are mistaken; and then, the other was hideous, while this one is not ugly, indeed, rather good-looking. Oh, it cannot be!"

"And I tell you that it is; you will see."

At this absolute assertion the woman raised her large red and white face and looked at the ceiling with a hideous expression. At this moment she appeared to Marius even more formidable than her husband, for she was a sow with the glance of a tigress.

"What!" she continued, "that horrible young lady who looked at my daughters with an air of pity is that vagabond! Oh! I should like to jump on her stomach with wooden shoes."

She leaped off the bed, and stood for a moment unkempt, with swollen nostrils, parted lips, and clenched fists; then she fell back again on the bed. The husband walked up and down and paid no attention to his wife. After a short silence he went up to her and stood in front of her with folded arms, as he had done a few moments previously.

Digitized by Microsoft®

"And shall I tell you something else?"

"What?" she asked.

He replied in a low, guttural voice, "That my fortune is made."

The wife looked at him in the way which means, "Can the man who is talking to me have suddenly gone mad?" He continued, —

"Thunder! I have been a long time a parishioner of the parish of die-of-hunger-if-you-are-cold, and die-of-cold-if-you-have-bread! I have had enough of that misery! I am not jesting, for I no longer consider this comical. I have had enough jokes, good God! and want no more farces, by the Eternal Father! I wish to eat when I am hungry, and drink when I am thirsty: to gorge, sleep, and do nothing. I want to have my turn now, and mean to be a bit of a millionnaire before I rot!" He walked up and down the room and added, "Like the rest!"

"What do you mean?" his wife asked.

He shook his head, winked, and raised his voice like a street quack who is going to furnish a proof.

"What I mean? Listen!"

"Not so loud," said his wife, "if it is business which ought not to be overheard."

"Nonsense! by whom, — by the neighbor? I saw him go out just now. Besides, what does that long-legged ass listen to? And then, I tell you I saw him go out." Still, by a species of instinct Jondrette lowered his voice, though not so low that his remarks escaped Marius. A favorable circumstance was that the fallen snow deadened the sound of the

Digitized by Microsoft®

vehicles on the boulevard. This is what Marius heard: —

"Listen carefully. The Crœsus is trapped, or as good as trapped. It is done, arranged, and I have seen the people. He will come at six this evening to bring the sixty francs, the vagabond! Did you notice how I blabbed to him about my sixty francs, my landlord, my February 4th? Why, it is not a quarter-day, the ass. Well, he will come at six o'clock, and at that hour the neighbor has gone to dinner, and Mother Bourgon is washing up dishes in town, so there will be no one in the house. The neighbor never comes in before eleven o'clock. The little ones will be on the watch, you will help us, and he will make a sacrifice."

"And suppose he does not?" the wife asked.

Jondrette made a sinister gesture, and said, "We will do it for him."

And he burst into a laugh: it was the first time that Marius saw him laugh, and this laugh was cold and gentle, and produced a shudder. Jondrette opened a cupboard near the fire-place, and took out an old cap, which he put on his head, after brushing it with his cuff.

"Now," he said, "I am going out, for I have some more people to see, good men. I shall be away as short a time as possible, for it is a famous affair; and do you keep house."

And he stood thoughtfully with his hands in his trousers' pockets and suddenly exclaimed, —

"Do you know that it is very lucky he did not recognize me, for if he had done so he would not have

Digitized by Microsoft®

returned, and would have slipped from us. It was my beard that saved us, — my romantic beard, my pretty little beard."

And he laughed again. He went to the window; the snow was still falling, and striping the gray sky.

"What filthy weather!" he said.

Then he buttoned up his great-coat.

"The skin is too big, but no matter," he added. "It was devilish lucky that the old villain left it for me, for had he not I could not have gone out, and the whole affair would have been spoiled. On what slight accidents things depend!"

And pulling his cap over his eyes, he went out, but had only gone a short distance when the door opened again, and his sharp, intelligent face reappeared in the aperture.

"I forgot," he said; "you will get a chafing-dish of charcoal ready."

And he threw into his wife's apron the five-franc piece which the "philanthropist" left him.

"How many bushels of charcoal?" the wife asked.

"Two, at least."

"That will cost thirty sous, and with the rest I will buy some grub."

"Hang it, no!"

"Why?"

"Don't spend the five *balls*."

"Why not?"

"Because I have something to buy too."

"What?"

"Something."

"How much do you want?"

Digitized by Microsoft®

"Where is the nearest ironmonger's?"

"In the Rue Mouffetard."

"Ah, yes, at the corner of a street. I remember the shop."

"But tell me how much you want for what you have to buy."

"From fifty sous to three francs."

"There won't be much left for dinner."

"Don't bother about eating to-day; there is something better to do."

"That's enough, my jewel."

Jondrette closed the door again, and then Marius heard his steps as he went along the passage and down the stairs. It struck one at this moment from St. Medard's.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XIII.

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT.

MARIUS, dreamer though he was, possessed, as we have said, a firm and energetic nature. His habits of solitary contemplation, by developing compassion and sympathy within him, had perhaps diminished the power of being irritated, but left intact the power of becoming indignant: he had the benevolence of a brahmin and the sternness of a judge, and while he pitied a toad he crushed a viper. At present he had a nest of vipers before him, and he said, "I must set my foot upon these villains." Not one of the enigmas which he hoped to see cleared up was solved; on the contrary, they had become more dense, and he had learned no more about the pretty girl of the Luxembourg and the man whom he called M. Leblanc, save that Jondrette knew them. Through the dark words which had been uttered he only saw one thing distinctly, that a snare was preparing, — an obscure but terrible snare; that they both ran an imminent danger, she probably, and the father certainly; and that he must save them, and foil the hideous combinations of the Jondrettes by destroying their spider's web.

Digitized by Microsoft®

He watched the woman for a moment; she had taken an old sheet-iron furnace from the corner, and was rummaging among the scraps of old iron. He got off the chest of drawers as gently as he could, and careful not to make any noise. In his terror at what was preparing, and the horror with which the Jondrettes filled him, he felt a species of joy at the idea that it might perhaps be in his power to render such a service to her whom he loved. But what was he to do? Should he warn the menaced persons? Where was he to find them? for he did not know their address. They had reappeared to him momentarily, and then plunged again into the immense profundities of Paris. Should he wait for M. Leblanc at the gate at the moment when he arrived that evening and warn him of the snare? But Jondrette and his comrades would see him on the watch. The place was deserted, they would be stronger than he, they would find means to get him out of the way, and the man whom Marius wished to save would be lost. It had just struck one, and as the snare was laid for six o'clock, Marius had five hours before him. There was only one thing to be done; he put on his best coat, tied a handkerchief round his neck, took his hat, and went out, making no more noise than if he were walking barefoot on moss; besides, the woman was still rummaging the old iron.

Once outside the house, he turned into the Rue du Petit Banquier. About the middle of the street he found himself near a very low wall, which it was possible to bestride in some places, and which surrounded unoccupied ground. He was walking slowly,

Digitized by Microsoft®

deep in thought as he was, and the snow deadened his footsteps, when all at once he heard voices talking close to him. He turned his head, but the street was deserted; it was open day, and yet he distinctly heard the voices. He thought of looking over the wall, and really saw two men seated in the snow, and conversing in a low voice. They were strangers to him: one was a bearded man in a blouse, and the other a hairy man in rags. The bearded man wore a Greek cap, while the other was bareheaded, and had snow in his hair. By thrusting out his head over them Marius could hear the hairy man say to the other, with a nudge, —

"With Patron Minette it cannot fail."

"Do you think so?" asked the bearded man; and the hairy man added, —

"It will be five hundred balls for each, and the worst that can happen is five years, six years, or ten at the most."

The other replied with some hesitation, and shuddering under his Greek cap, —

"That is a reality; and people must not go to meet things of that sort."

"I tell you that the affair cannot fail," the hairy man continued. "Father What 's-his-name's trap will be all ready."

Then they began talking of a melodrama which they had seen on the previous evening at the Gaité.

Marius walked on; but it seemed to him that the obscure remarks of these men, so strangely concealed behind this wall, and crouching in the snow, must have some connection with Jondrette's abominable

Digitized by Microsoft®

scheme; that must be the *affair*. He went toward the Faubourg St. Marceau, and asked at the first shop he came to where he could find a police commissary. He was told at No. 14, Rue de Pontoise, and he proceeded there. As he passed a baker's he bought a two-sous roll and ate it, as he foresaw that he should not dine. On the way he rendered justice to Providence. He thought that if he had not given the five francs in the morning to the girl, he should have followed M. Leblanc's hackney coach and consequently known nothing. There would, in that case, have been no obstacle to Jondrette's ambuscade, and M. Leblanc would have been lost, and doubtless his daughter with him.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XIV.

A POLICE-AGENT GIVES A LAWYER TWO "KNOCK-ME-DOWNS."

On reaching No. 14, Rue de Pontoise, he went up to the first floor and asked for the commissary.

"He is not in at present," said a clerk, "but there is an inspector to represent him. Will you speak to him? Is your business pressing?"

"Yes," said Marius.

The clerk led him to the commissary's office. A very tall man was leaning here against the fender of a stove, and holding up with both hands the skirts of a mighty coat with three capes. He had a square face, thin and firm lips, thick grayish whiskers, and a look of turning your pockets inside out. Of this look you might have said, not that it penetrated, but that it searched. This man did not appear much less ferocious or formidable than Jondrette; for sometimes it is just as dangerous to meet the dog as the wolf.

"What do you want?" he asked Marius, without adding, "sir."

"The police commissary."

"He is absent, but I represent him."

"It is a very secret affair."

"Then speak."

Digitized by Microsoft®

"And very urgent."

"In that case speak quick."

This man, who was calm and quick, was at once terrifying and reassuring. He inspired both fear and confidence. Marius told him of his adventure; that a person whom he only knew by sight was to be drawn that very evening into a trap; that he, Marius Pontmercy, lawyer, residing in the next room to the den, had heard the whole plot through the partition; that the scoundrel's name who invented the snare was Jondrette; that he would have accomplices, probably prowlers at the barrières, among others one Panchaud, *alias* Printanier, *alias* Bigrenaille; that Jondrette's daughters would be on the watch; that there were no means of warning the threatened man, as not even his name was known; and that, lastly, all this would come off at six in the evening, at the most deserted spot on the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, in the house No. 50–52.

At this number the Inspector raised his head, and said coldly, —

"It must be in the room at the end of the passage."

"Exactly," Marius replied; and added, "do you know the house?"

The Inspector remained silent for a moment, and then answered, while warming his boot-heel at the door of the stove, —

"Apparently so."

He went on between his teeth, talking less to Marius than his cravat.

"Patron Minette must be mixed up in this."

This remark struck Marius.

Digitized by Microsoft®

"Patron Minette!" he said; "yes, I heard that name mentioned."

And he told the Inspector of the dialogue between the hairy man and the bearded man in the snow behind the wall in the Rue du Petit Banquier. The Inspector growled, —

"The hairy man must be Burgon, and the bearded man, Demi-liard, *alias* Deux Milliards."

He was again looking down and meditating. "As for Father What's-his-name, I guess who he is. There, I have burnt my great-coat; they always make too large a fire in these cursed stoves. No. 50–52, formerly the property of one Gorbeau."

Then he looked at Marius.

"You only saw the hairy man and the bearded man?"

"And Panchaud."

"You did not see a small dandy prowling about there?"

"No."

"Nor a heavy lump of a fellow resembling the elephant in the Jardin des Plantes?"

"No."

"Nor a scamp who looks like an old red-tail?"

"No."

"As for the fourth, no one sees him, not even his adjutants, assistants, and those he employs. It is not surprising, therefore, that you did not perceive him."

"No. Who are all these men?" Marius asked.

The Inspector continued: "Besides, it is not their hour." He fell into silence, and presently added, —

Digitized by Microsoft®

"50–52. I know the shanty. It is impossible for us to hide ourselves in the interior without the actors perceiving us, and then they would escape by putting off the farce. They are so modest, and frightened at an audience. That won't do, for I want to hear them sing and make them dance."

This soliloquy ended, he turned to Marius, and asked, as he looked at him searchingly, —

"Would you be afraid?"

"Of what?" Marius asked.

"Of these men."

"No more than I am of you," Marius answered roughly, for he was beginning to notice that this policeman had not yet said, "sir."

The Inspector looked at Marius more intently still, and continued, with a sort of sententious solemnity, —

"You speak like a brave man and like an honest man. Courage does not fear crime, nor honesty the authorities."

Marius interrupted him, —

"That is all very well, but what do you intend doing?"

The Inspector restricted himself to saying, —

"The lodgers in that house have latch-keys to let themselves in at night. You have one?"

"Yes," said Marius.

"Have you it about you?"

"Yes."

"Give it to me," the Inspector said.

Marius took the key out of his waistcoat pocket, handed it to the Inspector, and added, —

Digitized by Microsoft®

"If you take my advice you will bring a strong force."

The Inspector gave Marius such a glance as Voltaire would have given a Provincial Academician who proposed a rhyme to him; then he thrust both hands into his immense coat-pockets and produced two small steel pistols, of the sort called "knock-me-downs." He handed them to Marius, saying sharply and quickly, —

"Take these. Go home. Conceal yourself in your room, and let them suppose you out. They are loaded, both with two bullets. You will watch, as you tell me there is a hole in the wall. People will arrive; let them go on a little. When you fancy the matter ripe, and you think it time to stop it, you will fire a pistol, but not too soon. The rest concerns me. A shot in the air, in the ceiling, I don't care where, — but, mind, not too soon. Wait till the commencement of the execution. You are a lawyer, and know what that means."

Marius took the pistols and placed them in a side pocket of his coat.

"They bulge that way, and attract attention," said the Inspector; "put them in your trousers' pockets."

Marius did so.

"And now," the Inspector continued, "there is not a moment for any one to lose. What o'clock is it? Half-past two. You said seven?"

"Six o'clock," Marius corrected.

"I have time," the Inspector added; "but only just time. Do not forget anything I have said to you. A pistol-shot."

Digitized by Microsoft®

"All right," Marius replied.

And as he put his hand on the latch to leave the room the Inspector shouted to him, —

"By the way, if you should want me between this and then, come or send here. Ask for Inspector Javert."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XV.

JONDRETTE MAKES HIS PURCHASE.

At about three o'clock Courfeyrac happened to pass along the Rue Mouffetard, accompanied by Bossuet. The snow was thicker than ever, and filled the air, and Bossuet had just said to Courfeyrac, —

"To see all these flakes of snow fall, we might say that the sky is suffering from a plague of white butterflies."

All at once Bossuet noticed Marius coming up the street toward the barrière with a peculiar look.

"Hilloh!" said Bossuet, "there 's Marius."

"I saw him," said Courfeyrac; "but we won't speak to him."

"Why not?"

"He is busy."

"At what?"

"Do you not see that he looks as if he were following some one?"

"That is true," said Bossuet.

"Only see what eyes he makes!" Courfeyrac added.

"But whom the deuce is he following?"

"Some Mimi-Goton with flowers in her cap. He is in love."

Digitized by Microsoft®

"But," Bossuet observed, "I do not see any Mimi or any Goton, or any cap trimmed with flowers, in the street. There is not a single woman."

Courfeyrac looked, and exclaimed, "He is following a man."

A man wearing a cap, and whose gray beard could be distinguished, although his back was turned, was walking about twenty yards ahead of Marius. This man was dressed in a perfectly new great-coat, which was too large for him, and a frightful pair of ragged trousers all black with mud. Bossuet burst into a laugh.

"Who can the man be?"

"That?" Courfeyrac replied; "oh, he is a poet. Poets are fond of wearing the trousers of rabbit-skin pedlers and the coats of the Peers of France."

"Let us see where Marius is going," said Bossuet, "and where this man is going. Suppose we follow them, eh?"

"Bossuet!" Courfeyrac exclaimed, "Eagle of Meaux, you are a prodigious brute to think of foling a man who is following a man."

They turned back. Marius had really seen Jondrette in the Rue Mouffetard, and was following him. Jondrette was walking along, not at all suspecting that an eye was already fixed upon him. He left the Rue Mouffetard, and Marius saw him enter one of the most hideous lodging-houses in the Rue Gracieuse, where he remained for about a quarter of an hour, and then returned to the Rue Mouffetard. He stopped at an ironmonger's shop, which was at that period at the corner of the Rue Pierre-Lombard; and

Digitized by Microsoft®

a few minutes after Marius saw him come out of the shop, holding a large cold-chisel set in a wooden handle, which he hid under his great coat. He then turned to his left and hurried toward the Rue du Petit Banquier. Day was dying; the snow, which had ceased for a moment, had begun again, and Marius concealed himself at the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier, which was deserted as usual, and did not follow Jondrette. It was lucky that he acted thus, for Jondrette, on reaching the spot where Marius had listened to the conversation of the hairy man and the bearded man, looked round, made sure that he was not followed, clambered over the wall, and disappeared. The unused ground which this wall enclosed communicated with the back yard of a livery-stable-keeper of bad repute, who had been a bankrupt, and still had a few vehicles standing under sheds.

Marius thought it would be as well to take advantage of Jondrette's absence and return home. Besides, time was slipping away, and every evening Mame Bougon, when she went to wash up dishes in town, was accustomed to close the gate, and, as Marius had given his latch-key to the Inspector, it was important that he should be in time. Night had nearly set in along the whole horizon, and in the whole immensity there was only one point still illumined by the sun, and that was the moon, which was rising red behind the low dome of the Salpêtrière. Marius hurried to No. 50–52, and the gate was still open when he arrived. He went up the stairs on tip-toe, and glided along the passage-wall to

Digitized by Microsoft®

his room. This passage, it will be remembered, was bordered on either side by rooms which were now to let, and Mame Bougon, as a general rule, left the doors open. While passing one of these doors, Marius fancied that he could see in the uninhabited room four men's heads vaguely lit up by a remnant of daylight which fell through a window. Marius did not attempt to see, as he did not wish to be seen himself; and he managed to re-enter his room noiselessly and unseen. It was high time, for a moment after he heard Mame Bougon going out, and the house-gate shutting.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XVI.

A SONG TO AN ENGLISH AIR POPULAR IN 1832.

MARIUS sat down on his bed: it might be about half-past five, and only half an hour separated him from what was about to happen. He heard his arteries beat as you hear the ticking of a clock in the darkness, and he thought of the double march which was taking place at this moment in the shadows, — crime advancing on one side, and justice coming up on the other. He was not frightened, but he could not think without a certain tremor of the things that were going to happen, like all those who are suddenly assailed by a surprising adventure. This whole day produced on him the effect of a dream, and in order not to believe himself the prey of a nightmare he was obliged to feel in his pockets the cold barrels of the pistols. It no longer snowed; the moon, now very bright, dissipated the mist, and its rays, mingled with the white reflection from the fallen snow, imparted a twilight appearance to the room. There was a light in Jondrette's room, and Marius could see the hole in the partition glowing with a ruddy brilliancy that appeared to him the color of blood. It was evident that this light could

Digitized by Microsoft®

not be produced by a candle. There was no movement in the den, no one stirred there, no one spoke, there was not a breath; the silence was chilling and profound, and had it not been for the light, Marius might have fancied himself close to a grave. He gently took off his boots and thrust them under the bed. Several minutes elapsed, and then Marius heard the house-gate creaking on its hinges, a heavy quick step ran up the stairs and along the passage, the hasp of the door was noisily raised; it was Jondrette returned home. All at once several voices were raised, and it was plain that the whole family were at home. They were merely silent in the master's absence, like the whelps in the absence of the wolves.

"It is I," he said.

"Good evening, pappy," the girls yelped.

"Well?" the wife asked.

"All is well," Jondrette answered, "but I am cold as a starved dog. That's right, I am glad to see that you are dressed, for it inspires confidence."

"All ready to go out."

"You will not forget anything that I told you? You will do it all right."

"Of course."

"Because —" Jondrette began, but did not complete the sentence.

Marius heard him lay something heavy on the table, probably the chisel which he had bought.

"Well," Jondrette continued, "have you been eating here?"

"Yes," said the mother; "I bought three large

Digitized by Microsoft®

potatoes and some salt. I took advantage of the fire to roast them."

"Good!" Jondrette remarked; "to-morrow you will dine with me: we will have a duck and trimmings, and you will feed like Charles the Tenth."

Then he added, lowering his voice, —

"The mousetrap is open, and the cats are here."

He again lowered his voice and said, —

"Put this in the fire."

Marius heard a clicking of coals stirred with pincers or some iron tool, and Jondrette ask, —

"Have you tallowed the hinges of the door, so that they may make no noise?"

"Yes," the mother answered.

"What o'clock is it?"

"Close on six. It has struck the half-hour at St. Médard."

"Hang it!" said Jondrette, "the girls must go on the watch. Come here and listen to me."

There was a whispering, and then Jondrette's voice was again uplifted.

"Has Mame Bougon gone?"

"Yes," the mother answered.

"Are you sure there is nobody in the neighbor's room?"

"He has not come in all day, and you know that this is his dinner hour."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite."

"No matter," Jondrette added; "there is no harm in going to see whether he is in. Daughter, take the candle and go."

Digitized by Microsoft®

Marius fell on his hands and knees and silently crawled under the bed; he had scarce done so ere he saw light through the cracks of his door.

"Papa," a voice exclaimed, "he is out."

He recognized the elder girl's voice.

"Have you been in his room?" the father asked.

"No," the girl replied; "but as his key is in his door he has gone out."

The father shouted, —

"Go in, all the same."

The door opened, and Marius saw the girl come in, candle in hand. She was the same as in the morning, save that she was even more fearful in this light. She walked straight up to the bed, and Marius suffered a moment of intense anxiety; but there was a looking-glass hanging from a nail by the bedside, and it was to that she proceeded. She stood on tip-toe and looked at herself; a noise of iron being moved could be heard in the other room. She smoothed her hair with her hand, and smiled in the glass while singing, in her cracked and sepulchral voice, —

"Nos amours ont duré toute une semaine,
Mais que du bonheur les instants sont courts,
S'adorer huit jours c'était bien la peine!
Le temps des amours devrait durer toujours!
Devrait durer toujours! devrait durer toujours."

Still Marius trembled, for he thought that she could not help hearing his breathing. She walked to the window and looked out, while saying aloud with the half-crazy look she had, —

Digitized by Microsoft®

"How ugly Paris is when it has put on a white sheet!"

She returned to the glass, and began taking a fresh look at herself, first full face and then three-quarters.

"Well," asked the father, "what are you doing there?"

"I am looking under the bed and the furniture," she said, as she continued to smooth her hair; "but there is nobody."

"You she-devil!" the father yelled. "Come here directly, and lose no time."

"Coming, coming," she said; "there 's no time to do anything here."

Then she hummed, —

> "Vous me quittez pour aller à la gloire,
> Mon triste cœur suivra partout vos pas."

She took a parting glance at the glass and went off, closing the door after her. A moment later Marius heard the sound of the girls' naked feet pattering along the passage, and Jondrette's voice shouting to them, —

"Pay attention! One at the barrière, and the other at the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier. Do not for a minute lose sight of the door of the house, and if you see anything come back at once — at once; you have a key to let yourselves in."

The elder daughter grumbled, —

"To stand sentry barefooted in the snow, what a treat!"

"To-morrow you shall have beetle-colored silk boots," the father said.

Digitized by Microsoft®

They went down the stairs, and a few seconds later the sound of the gate closing below announced that they had reached the street. The only persons in the house now were Marius, the Jondrettes, and probably, too, the mysterious beings of whom Marius had caught a glimpse in the gloom behind the door of the unoccupied room.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XVII.

THE USE OF MARIUS'S FIVE-FRANC PIECE.

MARIUS judged that the moment had arrived for him to return to his observatory. In a second, and with the agility of his age, he was at the hole in the partition, and peeped through. The interior of Jondrette's lodging offered a strange appearance, and Marius was able to account for the peculiar light he had noticed. A candle was burning in a verdigrised candlestick, but it was not this which really illumined the room; the whole den was lit up with the ruddy glow of a brazier standing in the fire-place, and filled with incandescent charcoal; it was the heating-dish which the wife had prepared in the morning. The charcoal was glowing and the heating-dish red; a bluish flame played round it, and rendered it easy to recognize the shape of the chisel purchased by Jondrette, which was heating in the charcoal. In a corner, near the door, could be seen two heaps, — one apparently of old iron, the other of ropes, arranged for some anticipated purpose. All this, to a person who did not know what was going to occur, would have made his mind vacillate between a very simple and a very sinister idea. The room, thus lit up,

Digitized by Microsoft®

resembled a forge more than a mouth of hell; but Jondrette, in this light, was more like a demon than a blacksmith.

The heat of the coal-fire was so great that the candle on the table was melted and guttering on the side turned toward it. An old copper dark-lantern, worthy of a Diogenes who had turned Cartouche, was standing on the mantel-piece. The heating-dish, which stood in the fire-place close to the decaying logs, sent its smoke up the chimney, and thus produced no smell. The moon, which found its way through the skylight, poured its whiteness on the purple and flashing garret, and to the poetic mind of Marius, who was a dreamer even in the moment of action, it was like a thought of heaven mingled with the shapeless dreams of earth. A breath of air, that penetrated through the broken pane, also helped to dissipate the smell of charcoal and conceal the heating-dish. Jondrette's den, if our readers remember what we have said about the house, was admirably selected to serve as the scene of a violent and dark deed, and as a covert for crime. It was the farthest room in the most isolated house on the most deserted Parisian boulevard; and if ambushes did not exist they would have been invented there. The whole length of a house and a number of uninhabited rooms separated this lair from the boulevard, and the only window in it looked out on fields enclosed by walls and fences. Jondrette had lit his pipe, was seated on the bottomless chair and smoking, and his wife was speaking to him in a low voice.

If Marius had been Courfeyrac, that is to say, one

Digitized by Microsoft®

of those men who laugh at every opportunity, he would have burst into a roar when his eye fell on Mother Jondrette. She had on a bonnet with black feathers, like the hats worn by the heralds at the coronation of Charles X., an immense tartan shawl over her cotton skirt, and the man's shoes which her daughter had disdained in the morning. It was this attire which drew from Jondrette the exclamation, "That's right; I am glad to see that you are dressed, for it inspires confidence." As for Jondrette, he had not taken off the new coat which M. Leblanc had given him, and his dress continued to offer that contrast between trousers and coat which constituted in Courfeyrac's sight the ideal of the poet. All at once Jondrette raised his voice: —

"By the way, in such weather as this he will come in a hackney coach. Light your lamp and go down, and keep behind the front gate; when you hear the vehicle stop you will open the gate at once, light him upstairs and along the passage, and when he has come in here you will go down as quickly as you can, pay the coachman, and discharge him."

"Where is the money to come from?" the woman asked.

Jondrette felt in his pocket, and gave her five francs.

"What is this?" she exclaimed.

"The monarch which our neighbor gave us this morning," responded Jondrette with dignity, and added, "we shall want two chairs, though."

"What for?"

"Why, to sit down!"

Digitized by Microsoft®

Marius shuddered on hearing the woman make the quiet answer, —

"Well, I will go and fetch our neighbor's."

And with a rapid movement she opened the door and stepped into the passage. Marius had not really the time to get off the drawers and hide under his bed.

"Take the candle!" Jondrette shouted.

"No," she said, "it would bother me, for I have two chairs to carry. Besides, the moon is shining."

Marius heard the heavy hand of Mother Jondrette fumbling for his key in the darkness. The door opened, and he remained nailed to his post by alarm and stupor. The woman came in; the sky-light sent a moonbeam between two large patches of shade, and one of these patches entirely covered the wall against which Marius was standing, so that he disappeared. Mother Jondrette did not see Marius, took the two chairs, — the only two that Marius possessed, — and went off, noisily slamming the door after her. She re-entered the den.

"Here are the two chairs."

"And here is the lantern," the husband said; "make haste down."

She hastily obeyed, and Jondrette remained alone.

He placed the chairs on either side of the table, turned the chisel in the heating-dish, placed in front of the fire-place an old screen, which concealed the charcoal-pan, and then went to the corner where the heap of rope lay, and stooped down as if examining something. Marius then perceived that what he had taken for a shapeless heap was a rope-ladder,

Digitized by Microsoft®

very well made with wooden rungs, and two hooks to hang it by. This ladder and a few large tools, perfect crowbars, which were mingled with the heap of old iron in the corner, had not been there in the morning, and had evidently been brought in the afternoon, during the absence of Marius.

"They are edge-tool makers' implements," Marius thought.

Had he been a little better acquainted with the trade he would have recognized, in what he took for tool-makers' gear, certain instruments that could force or pick a lock, and others that could cut or pierce,—the two families of sinister tools which burglars call "cadets" and "fauchants." The fire-place, the table, and the two chairs were exactly opposite Marius, and as the charcoal-pan was concealed, the room was only illumined by the candle, and the smallest article on the table or the chimney-piece cast a long shadow; a cracked water-jug hid half a wall. There was in this room a hideous and menacing calm, and an expectation of something awful could be felt. Jondrette had let his pipe go out,—a sign of deep thought,—and had just sat down again. The candle caused the stern and fierce angles of his face to stand out; he was frowning, and suddenly thrust out his right hand now and then, as if answering the final counsels of a dark internal soliloquy. In one of the obscure replies he made to himself he opened the table-drawer, took out a long carving-knife hidden in it, and felt its edge on his thumb-nail. This done, he put the knife in the drawer, which he closed again. Marius, on his side,

Digitized by Microsoft®

drew the pistol from his pocket and cocked it, which produced a sharp, clicking sound. Jondrette started, and half rose from his chair.

"Who 's that?" he shouted.

Marius held his breath. Jondrette listened for a moment, and then said laughingly, —

"What an ass I am! It is the partition creaking."

Marius kept the pistol in his hand.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TWO CHAIRS FACE TO FACE.

At this moment the distant and melancholy vibration of a bell shook the windows; six o'clock was striking at St. Médard. Jondrette marked each stroke by a shake of the head, and when he had counted the last he snuffed the candle with his fingers. Then he began walking up and down the room, listened at the door, began walking again, and then listened once more. "If he comes!" he growled, and then returned to his chair. He was hardly seated ere the door opened. Mother Jondrette had opened it, and remained in the passage making a horrible grimace, which one of the holes in the dark lantern lit up from below.

"Step in, sir," she said.

"Enter, my benefactor!" Jondrette repeated as he hurriedly rose.

M. Leblanc appeared with that air of serenity which rendered him singularly venerable. He laid four louis on the table.

"Monsieur Fabantou, here is the money for your rent, and something more to put you a little straight. After that we will see."

Digitized by Microsoft®

"May Heaven repay you, my generous benefactor!" said Jondrette, and then rapidly approached his wife.

"Dismiss the coach."

She slipped away, while her husband made an infinitude of bows, and offered a chair to M. Leblanc. A moment after she returned, and whispered in his ear, "All right!"

The snow, which had not ceased to fall since morning, was now so thick that neither the arrival nor the departure of the coach had been heard. M. Leblanc had seated himself, and Jondrette now took possession of the chair opposite to him. And now the reader, in order to form an idea of the scene which is about to be acted, will kindly imagine the freezing night, the solitudes of the Salpêtrière covered with snow and white in the moonlight, like an immense winding-sheet, and the light of the lamps throwing a red glow here and there over these tragic boulevards and the long rows of black elms: not a passer-by for a quarter of a league round, and the Maison Gorbeau at its highest point of silence, horror, and night. In this house, amid this solitude and darkness, is Jondrette's spacious garret lit by a candle, and in this den two men are sitting at a table, — M. Leblanc calm, Jondrette smiling and terrible. Mother Jondrette, the she-wolf, is in a corner, and behind the partition, Marius, invisible, but not losing a word or a movement, with his eye on the watch, and pistols in hand. Marius, however, only felt an emotion of horror, but no fear: he clutched the butt of the pistol, and said to himself, feeling reassured, "I can stop

Digitized by Microsoft®

the scoundrel whenever I like." He felt that the police were somewhere in ambush, waiting for the appointed signal, and all ready to aid. In addition, he hoped that from this violent encounter between Jondrette and M. Leblanc some light would be thrown on all that he had an interest in knowing.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XIX.

TREATING OF DARK DEPTHS.

M. Leblanc was scarce seated ere he turned his eyes to the beds, which were empty.

"How is the poor little wounded girl?" he asked.

"Very bad," Jondrette replied with a heart-broken and grateful smile. "Very bad, my good sir. Her elder sister has taken her to La Bourbe to have her hand dressed. But you will see them, as they will return almost immediately."

"Madame Fabantou seems to me better?" M. Leblanc continued, taking a glance at the strange garb of Mother Jondrette, who, standing between him and the door, as if already guarding the outlet, was looking at him in a menacing and almost combative posture.

"She is dying," Jondrette said. "But what would you have, sir? That woman has so much courage. She is not a woman, but an ox."

Mother Jondrette, affected by the compliment, protested with the affectation of a flattered monster, —

"You are always too kind to me, Monsieur Jondrette."

"Jondrette?" said M. Leblanc; "why, I thought your name was Fabantou."

Digitized by Microsoft®

"Fabantou *alias* Jondrette," the husband quickly replied, — "a professional name."

And throwing at his wife a shrug of the shoulders which M. Leblanc did not see, he continued with an emphatic and caressing inflection of voice, —

"Ah! that poor dear and I have ever lived happily together, for what would be left us if we had not that, we are so wretched, respectable sir? I have arms, but no labor; a heart, but no work. I do not know how the Government manage it, but, on my word of honor, sir, I am no Jacobin, I wish them no harm; but if I were the ministers, on my most sacred word, things would go differently. For instance, I wished my daughters to learn the trade of making paper boxes. You will say to me, 'What! a trade?' Yes, a trade, a simple trade, a bread-winner. What a fall, my benefactor! What degradation, after persons have been in such circumstances as we were! But, alas! nothing is left us from our prosperous days. Nothing but one article, — a picture, to which I cling, but which I am ready to part with, as we must live."

While Jondrette was saying this with a sort of apparent disorder, which did not in any way alter the thoughtful and sagacious expression of his face, Marius raised his eyes and saw some one at the back of the room whom he had not seen before. A man had just entered, but so softly that the hinges had not been heard to creak. This man had on a violet knitted jacket, old, worn, stained, and full of holes, wide cotton-velvet trousers, thick socks on his feet, and no shirt; his neck was bare, his arms were naked and tattooed, and his face was daubed with black. He

Digitized by Microsoft®

seated himself silently, and with folded arms, on the nearest bed, and as he was behind Mother Jondrette, he could be but dimly distinguished. That sort of magnetic instinct which warns the eye caused M. Leblanc to turn almost at the same moment as Marius. He could not suppress a start of surprise, which Jondrette noticed.

"Ah, I see," Jondrette exclaimed, as he buttoned his coat complacently, "you are looking at your surtout? It fits me, really fits me capitally."

"Who is that man?" M. Leblanc asked.

"That?" said Jondrette; "oh, a neighbor; pay no attention to him."

The neighbor looked singular, but chemical factories abound in the Faubourg St. Marceau, and a workman may easily have a black face. M. Leblanc's whole person displayed a confident and intrepid candor as he continued, —

"I beg your pardon, but what were you saying, M. Fabantou?"

"I was saying, Monsieur, and dear protector," Jondrette replied, as he placed his elbows on the table and gazed at M. Leblanc with fixed and tender eyes, very like those of a boa-constrictor, — "I was saying that I had a picture to sell."

There was a slight noise at the door; a second man came in and seated himself on the bed behind Mother Jondrette. Like the first, he had bare arms and a mask, either of ink or soot. Though this man literally glided into the room, he could not prevent M. Leblanc noticing him.

"Take no heed," said Jondrette; "they are men

Digitized by Microsoft®

living in the house. I was saying that I had a valuable picture left; look here, sir."

He rose, walked to the wall, against which the panel to which we have already referred was leaning, and turned it round, while still letting it rest on the wall. It was something, in fact, that resembled a picture, and which the candle almost illumined. Marius could distinguish nothing, as Jondrette was standing between him and the picture; but he fancied he could catch a glimpse of a coarse daub, and a sort of principal character standing out of the canvas with the bold crudity of a showman's pictures and screen paintings.

"What is that?" M. Leblanc asked.

Jondrette exclaimed, —

"A masterpiece, a most valuable picture, my benefactor! I am as much attached to it as I am to my daughters, for it recalls dear memories. But, as I told you, — and I will not go back from my word, — I am willing to dispose of it, as we are in such poverty."

Either by accident, or some vague feeling of anxiety, M. Leblanc's eye, while examining the picture, returned to the end of the room. There were now four men there, three seated on the bed and one leaning against the door-post, but all four bare-armed, motionless, and with blackened faces. One of those on the bed was leaning against the wall with closed eyes and apparently asleep; this one was old, and the white hair on the blackened face was horrible. The other two were young, — one was hairy, the other bearded. Not a single one had shoes, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

those who did not wear socks were barefooted. Jondrette remarked that M. Leblanc's eyes rested on these men.

"They are friends, neighbors," he said; "their faces are black because they work about the coal. They are chimney-menders. Do not trouble yourself about them, sir, but buy my picture. Have pity on my misery. I will not ask much for it; what value do you set upon it?"

"Well," M. Leblanc said, looking Jondrette full in the face, like a man setting himself on guard, "it is some pot-house sign, and worth about three francs."

Jondrette replied gently, —

"Have you your pocket-book about you? I shall be satisfied with a thousand crowns."

M. Leblanc rose, set his back against the wall, and took a hurried glance round the room. He had Jondrette on his left by the window, and on his right the woman and the four men by the door. The four men did not stir, and did not even appear to see him. Jondrette had begun talking again with a plaintive accent, and with such a wandering eye that M. Leblanc might fairly believe that he simply had before him a man driven mad by misery.

"If you do not buy my picture, dear benefactor," Jondrette said, "I have no resource remaining, and nothing is left me but to throw myself into the river. When I think that I wished my two daughters to learn how to make paper boxes for new-year's gifts — Well, for that you require a table with a backboard to prevent the glasses falling on the ground, a stove

Digitized by Microsoft®

made expressly, a pot with three compartments for the three different degrees of strength which the glue must have, according as it is used for wood, paper, and cloth; a board to cut pasteboard on, a hammer, a pair of pincers, and the deuce knows what, and all that to gain four sous a day! And you must work fourteen hours; and each box passes thirteen times through the hands of the work-girl; and moistening the paper, and not spoiling anything; and keeping the glue hot — the devil! I tell you, four sous a day! How do you expect them to live?"

While speaking, Jondrette did not look at M. Leblanc, who was watching him. M. Leblanc's eye was fixed on Jondrette, and Jondrette's on the door, while Marius's gasping attention went from one to the other. M. Leblanc seemed to be asking himself, Is he a lunatic? And Jondrette repeated twice or thrice with all sorts of varied inflections in the suppliant style, "All that is left me is to throw myself into the river! The other day I went for that purpose down three steps by the side of the bridge of Austerlitz." All at once his eyes glistened with a hideous radiance, the little man drew himself up and became frightful, he walked a step toward M. Leblanc, and shouted in a thundering voice, —

"All this is not the question! Do you recognize me?"

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRAP.

THE attic door was torn open, and three men in blue cloth blouses and wearing masks of black paper came in. The first was thin, and carried an iron-shod cudgel; the second, who was a species of Colossus, held a butcher's pole-axe by the middle of the handle, with the hatchet down; while the third, a broad-shouldered fellow, not so thin as the first but not stout as the second, was armed with an enormous key stolen from some prison-gate. It seemed as if Jondrette had been awaiting the arrival of these men, and a hurried conversation took place between him and the man with the cudgel.

"Is all ready?" asked Jondrette.

"Yes," the thin man replied.

"Where is Montparnasse?"

"That jeune premier has stopped to talk to your eldest daughter."

"Is there a coach down there?"

"Yes."

"With two good horses?"

"Excellent."

"Is it waiting where I ordered?"

"Yes."

"All right," said Jondrette.

Digitized by Microsoft®

M. Leblanc was very pale. He looked all round the room like a man who understands into what a snare he has fallen, and his head, turned toward all the heads that surrounded him, moved on his neck with an attentive and surprised slowness, but there was nothing in his appearance that resembled fear. He had formed an improvised bulwark of the table, and this man, who a moment before merely looked like an old man, had suddenly become an athlete, and laid his robust fist on the back of his chair with a formidable and surprising gesture. This old man, so firm and brave in the presence of such a danger, seemed to possess one of those natures which are courageous in the same way as they are good, — easily and simply. The father of a woman we love is never a stranger to us, and Marius felt proud of this unknown man.

Three of the men whom Jondrette called chimney-menders had taken from the mass of iron, one a large pair of shears, another a crowbar for moving weights, and the third a hammer, and posted themselves in front of the door without saying a word. The old man remained on the bed, merely opening his eyes, and Mother Jondrette was sitting by his side. Marius thought that the moment for interference was at hand, and raised his right hand to the ceiling in the direction of the passage, ready to fire his pistol. Jondrette, after finishing his colloquy with the three men, turned again to M. Leblanc, and repeated the question with that low, restrained, and terrible laugh of his, —

"Do you not recognize me?"

Digitized by Microsoft®

M. Leblanc looked him in the face and answered, "No!"

Jondrette then went up to the table; he bent over the candle with folded arms, and placed his angular and ferocious face as close as he could to M. Leblanc's placid face, and in this posture of a wild beast which is going to bite he exclaimed, —

"My name is not Fabantou or Jondrette, but my name is Thénardier, the landlord of the inn at Montfermeil! Do you hear me, — Thénardier? Now do you recognize me?"

An almost imperceptible flush shot athwart M. Leblanc's forehead, and he answered, with his ordinary placidity, and without the slightest tremor in his voice, —

"No more than before."

Marius did not hear this answer, and any one who had seen him at this moment in the darkness would have found him haggard, stunned, and crushed. At the moment when Jondrette said, "My name is Thénardier," Marius trembled in all his limbs, and he leaned against the wall, as if he felt a cold sword-blade thrust through his heart. Then his right hand, raised in readiness to fire, slowly dropped, and at the moment when Jondrette repeated, "Do you hear me, — Thénardier?" Marius's relaxing fingers almost let the pistol fall. Jondrette, by revealing who he was, did not affect M. Leblanc, but he stunned Marius, for he knew this name of Thénardier, which was apparently unknown to M. Leblanc. Only remember what that name was for him! He had

Digitized by Microsoft®

carried it in his heart, recorded in his father's will! He bore it in the deepest shrine of his memory in the sacred recommendation, — "A man of the name of Thénardier saved my life; if my son meet this man he will do all he can for him." This name, it will be remembered, was one of the pieties of his soul, and he blended it with his father's name in his worship. What! this man was Thénardier, the landlord of Montfermeil, whom he had so long and so vainly sought! He found him now, and in what a state! His father's savior was a bandit! This man, to whom Marius burned to devote himself, was a monster! The liberator of Colonel Pontmercy was on the point of committing a crime whose outline Marius could not yet see very distinctly, but which resembled an assassination! And on whom? Great Heaven, what a fatality; what a bitter mockery of fate! His father commanded him from his tomb to do all in his power for Thénardier. During four years Marius had had no other idea but to pay this debt of his father's; and at the very moment when he was about to deliver over to justice a brigand in the act of crime, destiny cried to him, "It is Thénardier!" and he was at length about to requite this man for saving his father's life amid a hailstorm of grape-shot on the heroic field of Waterloo, by sending him to the scaffold! He had vowed that if ever he found this Thénardier he would throw himself at his feet; and he had found him, but for the purpose of handing him over to the executioner! His father said to him, "Help Thénardier," and he was about to answer that adored and sacred

Digitized by Microsoft®

voice by crushing Thénardier; to show his father in his grave the spectacle of the man who had dragged him from death at the peril of his own life being executed on the Place St. Jacques by the agency of his son, that Marius to whom he bequeathed this name! And then what a derision it was to have so long carried in his heart the last wishes of his father in order to perform exactly the contrary! But, on the other hand, how could he witness a murder and not prevent it? What! should he condemn the victim and spare the assassin? Could he be bound by any ties of gratitude to such a villain? All the ideas which Marius had entertained for four years were, as it were, run through the body by this unexpected stroke. He trembled; all depended on him; and he held in his hands the unconscious beings who were moving before his eyes. If he fired the pistol, M. Leblanc was saved and Thénardier lost; if he did not fire, M. Leblanc was sacrificed and Thénardier might, perhaps, escape. Must he hunt down the one, or let the other fall? There was remorse on either side. What should he do? Which should he choose, — be a defaulter to the most imperious recollections, to so many profound pledges taken to himself, to the most sacred duty, to the most venerated commands, disobey his father's will, or let a crime be accomplished? On one side he fancied he could hear "his Ursule" imploring him for her father, on the other the Colonel recommending Thénardier to him. He felt as if he were going mad. His knees gave way under him, and he had not even time to deliberate, as the scene he had

Digitized by Microsoft®

before him was being performed with such furious precipitation. It was a tornado of which he had fancied himself the master, but which was carrying him away: he was on the verge of fainting.

In the mean while Thénardier (we will not call him otherwise in future) was walking up and down before the table with a sort of wild and frenzied triumph. He seized the candlestick and placed it on the chimney-piece with such a violent blow that the candle nearly went out, and the tallow spattered the wall. Then he turned round furiously to M. Leblanc and spat forth these words: —

"Done brown! grilled, fricasseed! spatch-cocked!"

And he began walking again with a tremendous explosion.

"Ah! I have found you again, my excellent philanthropist, my millionnaire with the threadbare coat, the giver of dolls, the old niggard! Ah, you do not recognize me! I suppose it was n't you who came to my inn at Montfermeil just eight years ago, on the Christmas night of 1823! It was n't you who carried off Fantine's child, the Lark! It was n't you who wore a yellow watchman's coat, and had a parcel of clothes in your hand, just as you had this morning! Tell me, wife! It is his mania, it appears, to carry to houses bundles of woollen stockings, — the old charitable humbug! Are you a cap-maker, my Lord Millionnaire? You give your profits to the poor — what a holy man! what a mountebank! Ah, you do not recognize me! Well, I recognize you, and did so directly you thrust your muzzle in here. Ah, you will be taught that it is not a rosy game to go like

Digitized by Microsoft®

that to people's houses, under the excuse that they are inns, with such a wretched coat and poverty-stricken look that they feel inclined to give you a sou, and then, to play the generous, rob them of their bread-winner and threaten them in the woods! I'll teach you that you won't get off by bringing people when they are ruined a coat that is too large, and two paltry hospital blankets, you old scamp, you child-stealer!"

He stopped, and for a moment seemed to be speaking to himself. It appeared as if his fury fell into some hole, like the Rhone: then, as if finishing aloud the things he had just been saying to himself, he struck the table with his fist, and cried, —

"With his simple look!"

Then he apostrophized M. Leblanc.

"By heaven! you made a fool of me formerly, and are the cause of all my misfortunes. You got for fifteen hundred francs a girl who certainly belonged to rich parents, who had already brought me in a deal of money, and from whom I should have got an annuity! That girl would have made up to me all I lost in that wretched pot-house, where I threw away like an ass all my blessed savings! Oh, I wish that what was drunk at my house were poison to those who drank it! However, no matter! Tell me, I suppose you thought me a precious fool when you went off with the Lark! You had your cudgel in the forest, and were the stronger. To-day I shall have my revenge, for I hold all the trumps; you are done, my good fellow! Oh, how I laugh when I think that he fell into the trap! I told him that I

Digitized by Microsoft®

was an actor, that my name was Fabantou, that I had played comedy with Mamselle Mars, with Mamselle Muche, and that my landlord insisted on being paid the next day; and he did not even remember that January 8 and not February 4 is quarter-day, — the absurd idiot! And he has brought me these four paltry philippes, the ass! He had not the pluck to go as far as five hundred francs. And how he swallowed my platitudes! It amused me, and I said to myself, 'There's an ass for you! Well, I have got you; this morning I licked your paws, and to-night I shall gnaw your heart!'"

Thénardier stopped, out of breath. His little narrow chest panted like a forge-bellows; his eye was full of the ignoble happiness of a weak, cruel, and cowardly creature who is at length able to trample on the man he feared, and insult him whom he flattered; it is the joy of a dwarf putting his heel on the head of Goliath, the joy of a jackal beginning to rend a sick bull so near death as to be unable to defend itself, but with enough vitality to still suffer. M. Leblanc did not interrupt him, but said, when he ceased speaking, —

"I do not know what you mean, and you are mistaken. I am a very poor man, and anything but a millionnaire. I do not know you, and you take me for somebody else."

"Ah!" Thénardier said hoarsely, "a fine dodge! So you adhere to that joke, eh, old fellow? Ah, you do not remember, you do not see who I am!"

"Pardon me, sir," M. Leblanc replied, with a polite accent, which had something strange and

Digitized by Microsoft®

grand about it at such a moment, "I see that you are a bandit."

We may remind those who have not noticed the fact, that odious beings possess a susceptibility, and that monsters are ticklish. At the word "bandit," Mother Thénardier leaped from the bed, and her husband clutched a chair as if about to break it in his hand. "Don't stir, you!" he shouted to his wife, and then turning to M. Leblanc, said, —

"Bandit! yes, I know that you rich swells call us so. It is true that I have been bankrupt. I am in hiding, I have no bread, I have not a farthing, and I am a bandit! For three days I have eaten nothing, and I am a bandit! Ah, you fellows warm your toes, your wear pumps made by Sakoski, you have wadded coats like archbishops, you live on the first floors of houses where a porter is kept, you eat truffles, asparagus at forty francs the bundle in January, and green peas. You stuff yourselves, and when you want to know whether it is cold you look in the newspaper to see what Chevalier's thermometer marks; but we are the thermometers. We have no call to go and look at the corner of the Jour d'Horloge how many degrees of cold there are, for we feel the blood stopped in our veins, and the ice reach our hearts, and we say, 'There is no God!' and you come into our caverns, — yes, our caverns, — to call us bandits! But we will eat you, we will devour you, poor little chap! Monsieur le Millionnaire, learn this: I was an established man, I held a license, I was an elector, and am still a citizen, while you, perhaps, are not one!"

Digitized by Microsoft®

Here Thénardier advanced a step toward the men near the door, and added with a quiver, —

"When I think that he dares to come and address me like a cobbler!"

Then he turned upon M. Leblanc with a fresh outburst of frenzy, —

"And know this, too, my worthy philanthropist, I am not a doubtful man, or one whose name is unknown, and carries off children from houses! I am an ex-French soldier, and ought to have the cross! I was at Waterloo, and in the battle I saved the life of a General called the Comte de — I don't know what. He told me his name, but his dog of a voice was so feeble that I did not understand it. I only understood *Merci.* I should have liked his name better than his thanks. It would have helped me find him, by all that's great and glorious! The picture you see here, and which was painted by David at Bruqueselles, do you know whom it represents? It represents me, for David wished to immortalize the exploit. I have the General on my back, and I am carrying him through the grape-shot. That is the story! The General never did anything for me, and he is no better than the rest; but, for all that, I saved his life at the peril of my own, and I have my pockets filled with certificates of the fact. I am a soldier of Waterloo! And now that I have had the goodness to tell you all this, let us come to a finish; I want money, I want a deal of money, an enormous amount of money, or I shall exterminate you, by the thunder of heaven!"

Marius had gained a little mastery over his agony,

Digitized by Microsoft®

and was listening. The last possibility of doubt had vanished, and it was really the Thénardier of the will. Marius shuddered at the charge of ingratitude cast at his father, and which he was on the point of justifying so fatally, and his perplexities were redoubled. Besides, there was in Thénardier's every word, in his accent and gestures, in his glance, which caused flames to issue from every word, in this explosion of an evil nature displaying everything, in this admixture of boasting and abjectness, pride and meanness, rage and folly, in this chaos of real griefs and false sentiments, in this impudence of a wicked man enjoying the pleasure of violence, in this daring nudity of an ugly soul, and in this conflagration of every suffering combined with every hatred, something which was hideous as evil and poignant as truth.

The masterpiece, the picture by David, which he offered M. Leblanc, was, as the reader will have perceived, nought else than his public-house sign, painted by himself, and the sole relic he had preserved from his shipwreck at Montfermeil. As he had stepped aside Marius was now enabled to look at this thing, and in the daub he really recognized a battle, a background of smoke, and one man carrying another. It was the group of Thénardier and Pontmercy, — the savior sergeant and the saved colonel. Marius felt as if intoxicated, for this picture represented to some extent his loving father; it was no longer an inn sign-board but a resurrection; a tomb opened, a phantom rose. Marius heard his heart ringing at his temples; he had the guns of Waterloo

Digitized by Microsoft®

in his ears; his bleeding father vaguely painted on this ill-omened board startled him, and he fancied that the shapeless figure was gazing fixedly at him. When Thénardier regained breath he fastened his bloodshot eyes on M. Leblanc, and said to him in a low, sharp voice, —

"What have you to say before we put the screw on you?"

M. Leblanc was silent. In the midst of this silence a hoarse voice uttered this grim sarcasm in the passage, —

"If there's any wood to be chopped, I'm your man."

It was the fellow with the pole-axe amusing himself. At the same time an immense, hairy, earth-colored face appeared in the door with a frightful grin, which displayed not teeth but tusks. It was the face of the man with the pole-axe.

"Why have you taken off your mask?" Thénardier asked him furiously.

"To laugh," the man answered.

For some minutes past M. Leblanc seemed to be watching and following every movement of Thénardier, who, blinded and dazzled by his own rage, was walking up and down the room, in the confidence of knowing the door guarded, of holding an unarmed man, and of being nine against one, even supposing that his wife only counted for one man. In his speech to the man with the pole-axe he turned his back to M. Leblanc; the latter seizing the moment, upset the chair with his foot, the table with his fist, and with one bound, ere Thénardier was able

Digitized by Microsoft®

to turn, he was at the window. To open it and bestride the sill took only a second, and he was half out, when six powerful hands seized him and energetically dragged him back into the room. The three "chimney-sweeps" had rushed upon him, and at the same time Mother Thénardier seized him by the hair. At the noise which ensued the other bandits ran in from the passage, and the old man on the bed, who seemed the worse for liquor, came up tottering with a road-mender's hammer in his hand. One of the sweeps, whose blackened face the candle lit up, and in whom Marius recognized, in spite of the blackening, Panchaud *alias* Printanier *alias* Bigrenaille, raised above M. Leblanc's head a species of life-preserver, made of two lumps of lead at the ends of an iron bar. Marius could not resist this sight. "My father," he thought, "forgive me!" and his finger sought the trigger. He was on the point of firing, when Thénardier cried, —

"Do not hurt him!"

This desperate attempt of the victim, far from exasperating Thénardier, had calmed him. There were two men in him, — the ferocious man and the skilful man. Up to this moment, in the exuberance of triumph, and while standing before his motionless victim, the ferocious man had prevailed; but when the victim made an effort and appeared inclined to struggle, the skilful man reappeared and took the mastery.

"Do him no harm!" he repeated; and his first service was, though he little suspected it, that he stopped the discharge of the pistol and paralyzed

Digitized by Microsoft®

Marius, to whom the affair did not appear so urgent, and who in the presence of this new phase saw no harm in waiting a little longer. Who knew whether some accident might not occur which would deliver him from the frightful alternative of letting Ursule's father perish, or destroying the Colonel's savior? A herculean struggle had commenced. With one blow of his fist in the chest M. Leblanc sent the old man rolling in the middle of the room, and then with two back-handers knocked down two other assailants, and held one under each of his knees. The villains groaned under this pressure as under a granite mill-stone; but the four others had seized the formidable old man by the arms and neck, and were holding him down upon the two "chimney-menders." Thus, master of two, and mastered by the others, crushing those beneath him, and crushed by those above him, M. Leblanc disappeared beneath this horrible group of bandits, like a boar attacked by a howling pack of dogs. They succeeded in throwing him on to the bed nearest the window, and held him down. Mother Thénardier did not once let go his hair.

"Don't you interfere," Thénardier said to her; "you will tear your shawl."

The woman obeyed, as the she-wolf obeys the wolf, with a snarl.

"You fellows," Thénardier continued, "can search him."

M. Leblanc appeared to have given up all thought of resistance, and they searched him. He had nothing about him but a leathern purse containing six

Digitized by Microsoft®

francs and his handkerchief. Thénardier put the latter in his own pocket.

"What! no pocket-book?" he asked.

"No, and no watch," one of the "chimney-menders" replied.

"No matter," the masked man who held the large key muttered in the voice of a ventriloquist, "he is a tough old bird."

Thénardier went to the corner near the door, and took up some ropes, which he threw to them.

"Fasten him to the foot of the bed," he said; and noticing the old man whom M. Leblanc had knocked down still motionless on the floor, he asked,—

"Is Boulatruelle dead?"

"No," Bigrenaille answered, "he's drunk."

"Sweep him into a corner," Thénardier said.

Two of the "chimney-menders" thrust the drunkard with their feet to the side of the old iron.

"Babet, why did you bring so many?" Thénardier said in a whisper to the man with the cudgel; "it was unnecessary."

"They all wanted to be in it," the man answered, "for the season is bad, and there's nothing doing."

The bed upon which M. Leblanc had been thrown was a sort of hospital bed, on four clumsy wooden legs. M. Leblanc made no resistance. The bandits tied him firmly in an upright posture to the end of the bed, farthest from the window and nearest the chimney-piece. When the last knot was tied, Thénardier took a chair and sat down almost facing the prisoner. He was no longer the same man; in a few minutes his countenance had passed from frenzied

Digitized by Microsoft®

violence to tranquil and cunning gentleness. Marius had a difficulty in recognizing in this polite smile of an official the almost bestial mouth which had been foaming a moment previously; he regarded this fantastic and alarming metamorphosis with stupor, and he felt as a man would feel who saw a tiger changed into an attorney.

"Sir," said Thénardier, and made a sign to the bandits who still held M. Leblanc to fall back; — "leave me to talk with the gentleman," he said. All withdrew to the door, and he resumed, —

"You did wrong to try and jump out of the window, for you might have broken a leg. Now, with your permission, we will talk quietly; and, in the first place, I will communicate to you a thing I have noticed, — that you have not yet uttered the slightest cry."

Thénardier was right; the fact was so, although it had escaped Marius in his trouble. M. Leblanc had merely said a few words without raising his voice, and even in his struggle near the window with the six bandits he had preserved the profoundest and most singular silence. Thénardier went on, —

"Good heavens! you might have cried 'Thieves!' a little while, and I should not have thought it improper. Such a thing as 'Murder!' is shouted on such occasions; I should not have taken it in ill part. It is very simple that a man should make a bit of a row when he finds himself with persons who do not inspire him with sufficient confidence. If you had done so we should not have interfered with you or thought of gagging you, and I will tell you the rea-

Digitized by Microsoft®

son why. This room is very deaf; it has only that in its favor, but it has that. It is a cellar; you might explode a bombshell here and it would not produce the effect of a drunkard's snore at the nearest post. Here cannon would go *Boum!* and thunder *Pouf!* It is a convenient lodging. But still, you did not cry out; all the better, and I compliment you on it, and will tell you what conclusion I draw from the fact. My dear sir, when a man cries for help, who come? The police; and after the police? Justice. Well, you did not cry out, and so you are no more desirous than we are for the arrival of the police. The fact is—and I have suspected it for some time—that you have some interest in hiding something; for our part, we have the same interest, and so we may be able to come to an understanding."

While saying this, Thénardier was trying to drive the sharp points that issued from his eyes into his prisoner's conscience. Besides, his language, marked with a sort of moderate and cunning insolence, was reserved and almost chosen, and in this villain who was just before only a bandit could now be seen "the man who had studied for the priesthood." The silence which the prisoner had maintained, this precaution which went so far as the very forgetfulness of care for his life, this resistance so opposed to the first movement of nature, which is to utter a cry, troubled and painfully amazed Marius, so soon as his attention was drawn to it. Thénardier's well-founded remark but rendered denser the mysterious gloom behind which was concealed the grave and peculiar face to which Courfeyrac had thrown the sobriquet

Digitized by Microsoft®

of M. Leblanc. But whoever this man might be, though bound with cords, surrounded by bandits, and half buried, so to speak, in a grave where the earth fell upon him at every step, — whether in the presence of Thénardier furious or of Thénardier gentle, — he remained impassive, and Marius could not refrain from admiring this face so superbly melancholy at such a moment. His was evidently a soul inaccessible to terror, and ignorant of what it is to be alarmed. He was one of those men who master the amazement produced by desperate situations. However extreme the crisis might be, however inevitable the catastrophe, he had none of the agony of the drowning man, who opens horrible eyes under water. Thénardier rose without any affectation, removed the screen from before the fire-place, and thus unmasked the heating-pan full of burning charcoal, in which the prisoner could perfectly see the chisel at a white heat, and studded here and there with small red stars. Then he came back and sat down near M. Leblanc.

"I will continue," he said; "we can come to an understanding, so let us settle this amicably. I did wrong to let my temper carry me away just now; I do not know where my senses were; I went much too far and uttered absurdities. For instance, because you are a millionnaire, I told you that I insisted on money, a great deal of money, an immense sum of money, and that was not reasonable. Good heavens! you may be rich, but you have burdens, for who is there that has not? I do not wish to ruin you, for, after all, I am not an insatiable fellow. I am not one of those men who, because they have advantage

Digitized by Microsoft®

of position, employ it to be ridiculous. Come, I will make a sacrifice on my side, and be satisfied with two hundred thousand francs."

M. Leblanc did not utter a syllable, and so Thénardier continued, —

"You see that I put plenty of water in my wine. I do not know the amount of your fortune, but I am aware that you do not care for money, and a benevolent man like you can easily give two hundred thousand francs to an unfortunate parent. Of course, you are reasonable too; you cannot have supposed that I would take all that trouble this morning, and organize this affair to-night,—which is a well-done job, in the opinion of these gentlemen,—merely to ask you for enough money to go and drink fifteen sous wine and eat veal at Desnoyer's. But two hundred thousand francs, that 's worth the trouble; once that trifle has come out of your pocket I will guarantee that you have nothing more to apprehend. You will say, 'But I have not two hundred thousand francs about me.' Oh, I am not unreasonable, and I do not insist on that. I only ask one thing of you: be good enough to write what I shall dictate."

Here Thénardier stopped, but added, laying a stress on the words and casting a smile at the heating-dish, —

"I warn you that I shall not accept the excuse that you cannot write."

A Grand Inquisitor might have envied that smile. Thénardier pushed the table close up to M. Leblanc, and took pen, ink, and paper out of the drawer, which he left half open, and in which the long knife-

Digitized by Microsoft®

blade flashed. He laid the sheet of paper before M. Leblanc.

"Write!" he said.

The prisoner at last spoke.

"How can you expect me to write? My arms are tied."

"That is true; I beg your pardon," said Thénardier, "you are quite right;" and turning to Bigrenaille, he added, "Unfasten the gentleman's right arm."

Panchaud *alias* Printanier *alias* Bigrenaille obeyed Thénardier's orders, and when the prisoner's hand was free, Thénardier dipped the pen in the ink and handed it to him.

"Make up your mind, sir, that you are in our absolute power; no human interference can liberate you, and we should really be sorry to be forced to proceed to disagreeable extremities. I know neither your name nor your address, but I warn you that you will remain tied up here until the person commissioned to deliver the letter you are going to write has returned. Now be good enough to write."

"What?" the prisoner asked.

Thénardier began dictating: "My daughter."

The prisoner started, and raised his eyes to Thénardier, —

"Make it, 'My dear daughter,'" said Thénardier.

M. Leblanc obeyed.

Thénardier continued, —

"Come to me at once, for I want you particularly. The person who delivers this letter to you has instructions to bring you to me. I am waiting. Come in perfect confidence."

Digitized by Microsoft®

M. Leblanc wrote this down.

Thénardier resumed, — "By the way, efface that 'Come in perfect confidence,' for it might lead to a supposition that the affair is not perfectly simple, and create distrust."

M. Leblanc erased the words.

"Now," Thénardier added, "sign it. What is your name?"

The prisoner laid down the pen, and asked, —

"For whom is this letter?"

"You know very well," Thénardier answered; "for the little one; I just told you so."

It was evident that Thénardier avoided mentioning the name of the girl in question: he called her "the Lark," he called her "the little one," but he did not pronounce her name. It was the precaution of a clever man who keeps his secret from his accomplices, and mentioning the name would have told them the whole affair, and taught them more than there was any occasion for them to know. So he repeated, —

"Sign it. What is your name?"

"Urbain Fabre," said the prisoner.

Thénardier, with the movement of a cat, thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out the handkerchief found on M. Leblanc. He sought for the mark, and held it to the candle.

"'U. F.,' all right, Urbain Fabre. Well, sign it 'U. F.'"

The prisoner did so.

"As two hands are needed to fold a letter, give it to me and I will do it."

Digitized by Microsoft®

This done, Thénardier added, —

"Write the address, 'Mademoiselle Fabre,' at your house. I know that you live somewhere near here in the neighborhood of St. Jacques du Haut-pas, as you attend Mass there every day, but I do not know in what street. I see that you understand your situation, and as you have not told a falsehood about your name, you will not do so about your address. Write it yourself."

The prisoner remained pensive for a moment, and then took up the pen and wrote, —

"Mademoiselle Fabre, at M. Urbain Fabre's, No. 17, Rue St. Dominique d'Enfer."

Thénardier seized the letter with a sort of feverish convulsion.

"Wife!" he shouted, and the woman came up. "Here is the letter, and you know what you have to do. There is a hackney coach down below, so be off at once, and return ditto." Then he turned to the man with the pole-axe, and said, "As you have taken off your muffler, you can accompany her. Get up behind the coach. You know where you left it?"

"Yes," said the man; and depositing the axe in a corner, he followed the woman. As they were going away Thénardier thrust his head out of the door and shouted down the passage, —

"Mind and do not lose the letter! Remember you have two hundred thousand francs about you."

The woman's hoarse voice replied, —

"Don't be frightened, I have put it in my stomach."

A minute had not elapsed when the crack of a whip could be heard rapidly retiring.

Digitized by Microsoft®

"All right," Thénardier growled, "they are going at a good pace; with a gallop like that she will be back in three quarters of an hour."

He drew up a chair to the fire-side, and sat down with folded arms, and holding his muddy boots to the heating-pan.

"My feet are cold," he said.

Only five bandits remained in the den with Thénardier and the prisoner. These men, through the masks or soot that covered their faces and rendered them, with a choice of horror, charcoal-burners, negroes, or demons, had a heavy, dull look, and it was plain that they performed a crime like a job, tranquilly, without passion or pity, and with a sort of *ennui*. They were heaped up in a corner like brutes, and were silent. Thénardier was warming his feet. The prisoner had fallen back into his taciturnity; a sinister calmness had succeeded the formidable noise which had filled the garret a few moments previously. The candle, on which a large mushroom had formed, scarce lit up the immense room; the heating-dish had grown black, and all these monstrous heads cast misshapen shadows upon the walls and the ceiling. No other sound was audible save the regular breathing of the old drunkard, who was asleep. Marius was waiting in a state of anxiety which everything tended to augment. The enigma was more impenetrable than ever; who was this "little one," whom Thénardier had also called "the Lark,"—was she "his Ursule"? The prisoner had not seemed affected by this name of the Lark, and had answered with the most natural air in the world, "I do not know what

Digitized by Microsoft®

you mean." On the other hand, the two letters "U. F." were explained; they were Urbain Fabre, and Ursule's name was no longer Ursule. This is what Marius saw most clearly. A sort of frightful fascination kept him nailed to the spot, whence he surveyed and commanded the whole scene. He stood there almost incapable of reflection and movement, as if annihilated by the frightful things which he saw close to him; and he waited, hoping for some incident, no matter its nature, unable to collect his thoughts, and not knowing what to do.

"In any case," he said, "if she is the Lark, I shall see her, for Mother Thénardier will bring her here. In that case I will give my life and blood, should it be necessary, to save her, and nothing shall stop me."

Nearly half an hour passed in this way; Thénardier seemed absorbed in dark thoughts, and the prisoner did not stir. Still Marius fancied that he could hear at intervals a low, dull sound in the direction of the prisoner. All at once Thénardier addressed his victim.

"By the way, M. Fabre," he said, "I may as well tell you something at once."

As these few words seemed the commencement of an explanation, Marius listened carefully. Thénardier continued, —

"My wife will be back soon, so do not be impatient. I believe that the Lark is really your daughter, and think it very simple that you should keep her; but listen to me for a moment. My wife will go to her with your letter, and I told Madame Thénardier to dress herself in the way you saw, that your

Digitized by Microsoft®

young lady might make no difficulty about following her. They will both get into the hackney coach with my comrade behind; near a certain barrier there is a trap drawn by two excellent horses; your young lady will be driven up to it in the hackney coach, and get into the trap with my pal, while my wife returns here to report progress. As for your young lady, no harm will be done her; she will be taken to a place where she will be all safe, and so soon as you have handed me the trifle of two hundred thousand francs she will be restored to you. If you have me arrested, my pal will settle the Lark, that's all."

The prisoner did not utter a word, and after a pause Thénardier continued, —

"It is simple enough, as you see, and there will be no harm, unless you like to make harm. I have told you all about it, and warned you, that you might know."

He stopped, but the prisoner did not interrupt the silence, and Thénardier added, —

"So soon as my wife has returned and said to me, 'The Lark is under way,' we will release you, and you can sleep at home if you like. You see that we have no ill intentions."

Frightful images passed across the mind of Marius. What! they were not going to bring the girl here! One of the monsters was going to carry her off in the darkness! — where? Oh, if it were she! and it was plain that it was she. Marius felt the beating of his heart stop; what should he do? Fire the pistol and deliver all these villains into the hands of justice? But the hideous man with the pole-axe could not be

Digitized by Microsoft®

the less out of reach with the girl, and Marius thought of Thénardier's words, whose sanguinary meaning he could read, — "If you have me arrested, my pal will settle the Lark;" now he felt himself checked, not only by the Colonel's will, but by his love and the peril of her whom he loved. The frightful situation, which had already lasted above an hour, changed its aspect at every moment, and Marius had the strength to review in turn all the most frightful conjectures, while seeking a hope and finding none. The tumult of his thoughts contrasted with the lugubrious silence of the den. In the midst of this silence the sound of the staircase door being opened and shut became audible. The prisoner gave a start in his bonds.

"Here's my wife," said Thénardier.

He had scarce finished speaking when Mother Thénardier rushed into the room, red, out of breath, and with flashing eyes, and shouted as she struck her thighs with her two big hands, —

"A false address!"

The brigand who had accompanied her appeared behind, and took up his pole-axe again.

"A false address?" Thénardier repeated, and she went on, —

"No Monsieur Urbain Fabre known at No. 17, Rue St. Dominique. They never heard of him."

She stopped to snort, and then continued, —

"Monsieur Thénardier, that old cove has made a fool of you; for you are too good-hearted, I keep on telling you. I would have cut his throat to begin with! and if he had sulked I would have boiled him alive! that would have made him speak and tell us

Digitized by Microsoft®

where his daughter is, and where he keeps his money. That is how I should have managed the affair. People are right when they say that men are more stupid than women. Nobody at No. 17, it is a large gateway. No Monsieur Fabre at No. 17, and we went at a gallop, with a fee for the driver and all! I spoke to the porter and his wife, who is a fine, tall woman, and they did not know anybody of the name."

Marius breathed again, for She, Ursule, or the Lark — he no longer knew her name — was saved. While the exasperated woman was vociferating, Thénardier sat down at the table; he remained for some minutes without saying a word, balancing his right leg and looking at the heating-dish with an air of savage reverie. At last he said to the prisoner slowly, and with a peculiarly ferocious accent, —

"A false address? Why, what did you expect?"

"To gain time!" the prisoner thundered.

And at the same moment he shook off his bonds, which were cut through: the prisoner was only fastened to the bed by one leg. Ere the seven men had time to look about them and rush forward, he had stretched out his hand toward the fire-place, and the Thénardiers and the brigands, driven back by surprise to the end of the room, saw him almost free, and in a formidable attitude, waving round his head the red-hot chisel, from which a sinister glare shot.

In the judicial inquiry that followed this affair it was stated that a large sou, cut and worked in a peculiar manner, was found in the garret when the

Digitized by Microsoft®

police made their descent upon it. It was one of those marvels of industry which the patience of the bagne engenders in the darkness and for the darkness, — marvels which are nought but instruments of escape. These hideous and yet delicate products of a prodigious art are in the jewelry trade what slang metaphors are in poetry; for there are Benvenuto Cellinis at the bagne, in the same way as there are Villons in language. The wretch who aspires to deliverance, finds means, without tools, or, at the most, with an old knife, to saw a sou in two, hollow out the two parts without injuring the dies, and form a thread in the edge of the sou, so that the sou may be reproduced. It screws and unscrews at pleasure, and is a box; and in this box a watch-spring saw is concealed, which, if well managed, will cut through fetters and iron bars. It is believed that the unhappy convict possesses only a sou; but, not at all, — he possesses liberty. It was a sou of this nature which was found by the police under the bed near the window, and a small saw of blue steel, which could be easily concealed in the sou, was also discovered. It is probable that at the moment when the bandits searched the prisoner he had the double sou about him, and hid it in his palm; and his right hand being at liberty afterwards, he unscrewed it, and employed the saw to cut the ropes. This would explain the slight noise and the almost imperceptible movements which Marius had noticed. As, however, he was unable to stoop down for fear of betraying himself, he had not cut the cord on his left leg. The bandits gradually recovered from their surprise.

Digitized by Microsoft®

"Be easy," said Bigrenaille to Thénardier, "he is still held by one leg, and will not fly away. I put the pack-thread round that paw."

Here the prisoner raised his voice, —

"You are villains, but my life is not worth so much trouble to defend. As for imagining that you could make me speak, make me write what I do not wish to write, or make me say what I do not intend to say — "

He pulled up the sleeve of his left arm and added, —

"Look here!"

At the same time he stretched out his arm and placed on the naked flesh the red-hot chisel, which he held in his right hand by the wooden handle. Then could be heard the frizzling of the burnt flesh, and the smell peculiar to torture-rooms spread through the garret. Marius tottered in horror, and the brigands themselves shuddered; but the face of the strange old man was scarce contracted, and while the red-hot steel was burying itself in the smoking wound, he — impassive and almost august — fixed on Thénardier his beautiful glance, in which there was no hatred, and in which suffering disappeared in a serene majesty. For in great and lofty natures the revolt of the flesh and of the senses when suffering from physical pain makes the soul appear on the brow, in the same way as the mutiny of troops compels the captain to show himself.

"Villains," he said, "be no more frightened of me than I am of you."

And tearing the chisel out of the wound, he

Digitized by Microsoft®

hurled it through the window, which had been left open. The horrible red-hot tool whirled through the night, and fell some distance off in the snow, which hissed at the contact. The prisoner continued, —

"Do to me what you like."

He was defenceless.

"Seize him," said Thénardier.

Two of the brigands laid their hands on his shoulders, and the masked man with the ventriloquist voice stood in front of him, ready to dash out his brains with a blow of the key at the slightest movement on his part. At the same time Marius heard below him, but so close that he could not see the speakers, the following remarks exchanged in a low voice, —

"There is only one thing to be done."

"Cut his throat!"

"Exactly."

It was the husband and wife holding council, and then Thénardier walked slowly to the table, opened the drawer, and took out the knife. Marius clutched the handle of the pistol in a state of extraordinary perplexity. For above an hour he had heard two voices in his conscience, one telling him to respect his father's will, while the other cried to him to succor the prisoner. These two voices continued their struggle uninterruptedly, and caused him an agony. He had vaguely hoped up to this moment to find some mode of reconciling these two duties, but nothing possible had occurred to him. Still the peril pressed; the last moment of delay was passed, for Thénardier, knife in hand, was reflecting a few paces

Digitized by Microsoft®

from the prisoner. Marius looked wildly around him, which is the last mechanical resource of despair. All at once he started; at his feet on his table a bright moonbeam lit up and seemed to point out to him a sheet of paper. On this sheet he read this line, written in large letters that very morning by the elder of Thénardier's daughters, — "*Here are the Slops.*" An idea, a flash, crossed Marius's mind; this was the solution of the frightful problem that tortured him, sparing the assassin and saving the victim. He knelt down on the chest-of-drawers, stretched forth his arm, seized the paper, softly detached a lump of plaster from the partition, wrapped it up in the paper, and threw it through the hole into the middle of the den. It was high time, for Thénardier had overcome his last fears, or his last scruples, and was going toward the prisoner.

"There 's something falling," his wife cried.

"What is it?" her husband asked.

The woman had bounded forward, and picked up the lump of plaster wrapped in paper, which she handed to her husband.

"How did it get here?" Thénardier asked.

"Why, hang it!" his wife asked, "how do you expect that it did? Through the window, of course."

"I saw it pass," said Bigrenaille.

Thénardier rapidly unfolded the paper, and held it close to the candle.

"Éponine's handwriting — The devil!"

He made a signal to his wife, who hurried up to

Digitized by Microsoft®

him, and showed her the line written on the paper, then added in a hollow voice, —

"Quick, the ladder! we must leave the bacon in the trap, and bolt."

"Without cutting the man's throat?" the Megæra asked.

"We have n't the time."

"Which way?" Bigrenaille remarked.

"By the window," Thénardier replied; "as Ponine threw the stone through the window, that's a proof that the house is not beset on that side."

The mask with the ventriloquist voice laid his key on the ground, raised his arms in the air, and opened and shut his hands thrice rapidly, without saying a word. This was like the signal for clearing for action aboard ship; the brigands who held the prisoner let him go, and in a twinkling the rope-ladder was dropped out of window and securely fastened to the sill by the two iron hooks. The prisoner paid no attention to what was going on around him; he seemed to be thinking or praying. So soon as the ladder was fixed, Thénardier cried, —

"The lady first."

And he dashed at the window; but as he was stepping out, Bigrenaille roughly seized him by the collar.

"No, no, my old joker, after us!" he said.

"After us!" the bandits yelled.

"You are children," said Thénardier; "we are losing time, and the police are at our heels."

"Very well, then," said one of the bandits, "let us draw lots as to who shall go first."

Digitized by Microsoft®

Thénardier exclaimed, —

"Are you mad? are you drunk? Why, what a set of humbugs; lose time, I suppose, draw lots, eh, — with a wet finger, a short straw, write our names and put them in a cap — "

"Would you like my hat?" a voice said at the door.

All turned; it was Javert, who held his hat in his hand and offered it smilingly.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXI.

ALWAYS BEGIN BY ARRESTING THE VICTIMS.

JAVERT posted his men at nightfall, and ambushed himself behind the trees of the Rue de la Barrière des Gobelins, which joins No. 50–52 on the other side of the boulevard. He had begun by opening his "pocket," in order to thrust into it the two girls ordered to watch the approaches to the den, but he had only "nailed" Azelma. As for Éponine, she was not at her post; she had disappeared, and he had not been able to seize her. Then Javert took up his post, and listened for the appointed signal. The departure and return of the hackney coach greatly perplexed him; at length he grew impatient, and feeling sure that there "was a nest there," and of being in "luck's way," and having recognized several of the bandits who went in, he resolved to enter without waiting for the pistol-shot. It will be remembered that he had Marius's latch-key.

He arrived just in time.

The startled bandits dashed at the weapons, which they had thrown into corners at the moment of their attempted escape; and in less than a second these seven men, formidable to look at, were grouped in a posture of defence, — one with his pole-axe,

Digitized by Microsoft®

another with his key, a third with his life-preserver, the others with crowbar, shears, and hammer, and Thénardier with his knife in his fist. The woman picked up an enormous paving-stone which lay in the angle of the room and served her daughter as a footstool. Javert restored his hat to his head, and walked into the room with folded arms, his cane hanging from his wrist, and his sword in his scabbard.

"Halt!" he shouted; "you will not leave by the window but by the door, which is not so unhealthy. You are seven and we are fifteen, so do not let us quarrel like water-carriers, but behave like gentlemen."

Bigrenaille drew a pistol from under his blouse, and placed it in Thénardier's hand, as he whispered, —

"It is Javert, and I dare not fire at that man. Dare you?"

"I should think so," Thénardier answered.

"Well, fire!"

Thénardier took the pistol and aimed at Javert; the Inspector, who was only three paces from him, looked at him fixedly, and contented himself with saying, —

"Don't fire, for the pistol won't go off."

Thénardier pulled the trigger; there was a flash in the pan.

"Did I not tell you so?" Javert remarked.

Bigrenaille threw his life-preserver at Javert's feet.

"You are the Emperor of the devils, and I surrender."

"And you?" Javert asked the other bandits.

Digitized by Microsoft®

They answered, "We too."

Javert remarked calmly, —

"That is all right; I begged you to behave like gentlemen."

"I only ask one thing," Bigrenaille remarked, — "that my tobacco may n't be stopped while I 'm in solitary confinement."

"Granted," said Javert.

Then he turned and shouted, "You can come in now!"

A squad of police, sword in hand, and agents armed with bludgeons and sticks, rushed in at Javert's summons, and bound the robbers. This crowd of men, scarce illumined by the candle, filled the den with shadows.

"Handcuff them all!" Javert cried.

"Just come this way!" a voice shouted, which was not that of a man, but of which no one could have said, "It is a woman's voice." Mother Thénardier had intrenched herself in one of the angles of the window, and it was she from whom this roar had come. The police and the agents fell back; she had thrown off her shawl and kept her bonnet on; her husband, crouching behind her, almost disappeared under the fallen shawl, and she covered him with her body, while raising the paving-stone above her head with both hands, like a giantess about to heave a rock.

"Heads below!" she screeched.

All fell back upon the passage, and there was a large open space in the centre of the garret. The hag took a glance at the bandits, who had suffered

Digitized by Microsoft®

themselves to be bound, and muttered, in a hoarse and guttural voice, — "The cowards!"

Javert smiled, and walked into the open space which the woman guarded with her eyes.

"Don't come nearer," she shrieked, "or I'll smash you. Be off!"

"What a grenadier!" said Javert; "the mother! You have a beard like a man, but I have claws like a woman."

And he continued to advance. Mother Thénardier, with flying hair and terrible looks, straddled her legs, bent back, and wildly hurled the paving-stone at Javert. He stooped, the stone passed over him, struck the wall, from which it dislodged a mass of plaster, and then ricochetted from angle to angle till it fell exhausted at Javert's feet. At the same moment Javert reached the Thénardiers; one of his large hands settled on the wife's shoulder, the other on the husband's head.

"Handcuffs here!" he shouted.

The policemen flocked in, and in a few seconds Javert's orders were carried out. The woman, quite crushed, looked at her own and her husband's manacled hands, fell on the ground, and bursting into tears, cried, —

"My daughters!"

"Oh, they are all right!" said Javert.

By this time the police had noticed the drunken man sleeping behind the door, and shook him; he woke up and stammered, —

"Is it all over, Jondrette?"

"Yes," Javert answered.

Digitized by Microsoft®

The six bound bandits were standing together, with their spectral faces, three daubed with black, and three masked.

"Keep on your masks," said Javert.

And, passing them in review, like a Frederick II. at a Potsdam parade, he said to the three "sweeps," —

"Good-day, Bigrenaille." "Good-day, Brujon." "Good-day, Deux Milliards."

Then turning to the three masks he said to the man with the pole-axe, "Good-day, Gueulemer," and to the man with the cudgel, "Good-day, Babet," and to the ventriloquist, "Here 's luck, Claquesous!"

At this moment he noticed the prisoner, who had not said a word since the arrival of the police, and held his head down.

"Untie the gentleman," said Javert, "and let no one leave the room."

After saying this he sat down in a lordly way at the table, on which the candle and the inkstand were still standing, took a stamped paper from his pocket, and began writing his report. When he had written a few lines, which are always the same formula, he raised his eyes.

"Bring the gentleman here whom these gentlemen had tied up."

The agents look around.

"Well," Javert asked, "where is he?"

The prisoner of the bandits, M. Leblanc, M. Urbain Fabre, the father of Ursule or the Lark, had disappeared. The door was guarded, but the window was not. So soon as he found himself

Digitized by Microsoft®

released, and while Javert was writing, he took advantage of the trouble, the tumult, the crowd, the darkness, and the moment when attention was not fixed upon him, to rush to the window. An agent ran up and looked out; he could see nobody, but the rope-ladder was still trembling.

"The devil!" said Javert between his teeth; "he must have been the best of the lot."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LITTLE CHILD WHO CRIED IN VOLUME SECOND.

On the day after that in which these events occurred in the house on the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, a lad, who apparently came from the bridge of Austerlitz, was trudging along the right-hand walk in the direction of the Barrière de Fontainebleau, at about nightfall. This boy was pale, thin, dressed in rags, wearing canvas trousers in the month of February, and singing at the top of his lungs. At the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier an old woman was stooping down and fumbling in a pile of rubbish by the lamplight; the lad ran against her as he passed, and fell back, with the exclamation, —

"My eye! why, I took that for an enormous, an enormous dog!"

He uttered the word *enormous* the second time with a sonorous twang which might be expressed by capitals, — "an enormous, an ENORMOUS dog." The old woman drew herself up furiously.

"You young devil!" she growled, "if I had not been stooping, I know where my foot would have been now."

The lad was already some distance off.

"Kisss! kisss!" he said; "after all, I may not have been mistaken."

Digitized by Microsoft®

The old woman, choked with indignation, drew herself up to her full height, and the street lantern fully lit up her livid face, which was hollowed by angles and wrinkles, and crow's-feet connecting the corners of the mouth. The body was lost in the darkness, and her head alone could be seen; she looked like a mask of Decrepitude lit up by a flash darting through the night. The lad looked at her.

"Madame," he said, "yours is not the style of beauty which would suit me."

He went his way, and began singing again, —

> "Le Roi Coup de sabot
> S'en allait à la chasse,
> À la chasse aux corbeaux."

At the end of these three lines he broke off. He had reached No. 50–52, and finding the gate closed, he began giving it re-echoing and heroic kicks, which indicated rather the shoes of the man which he wore than the feet of the boy which he had. By this time the same old woman whom he had met at the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier ran up after him, uttering shouts, and making the most extraordinary gestures.

"What's the matter? what's the matter? O Lord to God! the gate is being broken down, and the house broken into!"

The kicks continued, and the old woman puffed.

"Is that the way houses are treated at present?"

All at once she stopped, for she had recognized the gamin.

"Why, it is that Satan!"

Digitized by Microsoft®

"Hilloh! it's the old woman," said the boy. "Good evening, my dear Burgonmuche, I have come to see my ancestors."

The old woman answered with a composite grimace, an admirable improvisation of hatred deriving advantage from decrepitude and ugliness, which was unfortunately lost in the darkness, — "There's nobody here, scamp!"

"Nonsense," the boy said. "Where's father?"

"At La Force."

"Hilloh! and mother?"

"At St. Lazare."

"Very fine! and my sisters?"

"At the Madelonnettes."

The lad scratched the back of his ear, looked at Mame Bougon, and said, "Ah!"

Then he turned on his heels, and a moment later the old woman, who was standing in the gateway, heard him singing in his clear young voice, as he went off under the elms which were quivering in the winter breeze, —

"Le Roi Coupdesabot
S'en allait à la chasse,
À la chasse aux corbeaux.
Monté sur des échasses,
Quand on passait dessous,
On lui payait deux sous."

END OF PART THIRD.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft ®

Digitized by Microsoft®

PQ
2286
A45
1892
pt.3

Hugo, Victor Marie
Les misérables

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

Digitized by Microsoft®